

# LABOR'S NEW MILLIONS

MARY HEATON VORSE

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## *Books by Mary Heaton Vorse*

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SECOND CABIN  
STRIKE — A NOVEL OF GASTONIA  
A FOOTNOTE TO FOLLY: REMINISCENCES



# Labor's New Millions

BY MARY HEATON VORSE

FOREWORD BY MARQUIS W. CHILDS

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NEW YORK

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*Composed and printed in the United States of America by Union Labor*

AT THE RUMFORD PRESS, CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

*Typography by Robert Josephy*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgment is made to the *New Republic* and *Federated Press* for permission to reprint parts of articles which have appeared in their pages.

The sections in Chapter V, "A Night in Fisher — I." and "Pengally Hall," were written by Heaton Vorse.

Special acknowledgment is made to William B. Smith who materially assisted the revision of *Labor's New Millions*.



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## FOREWORD

TO HAVE been born into a household in conservative Amherst, Massachusetts, would not, it might seem at first glance, provide one with an ideal background for reporting on the American labor movement. An upbringing in a Victorian family might even appear to be something of a handicap to overcome. But Mary Heaton Vorse, in the course of the years that she has followed the rise of labor, has turned this background to her own great advantage.

It is not an exaggeration to say that by reason of this same background she has brought to what is the most important work of her long career a better understanding. She has seen the labor movement not as an isolated phenomenon in the broad sweep of American life but as an integral part of that life. Her knowledge of the whole range of living in America has peculiarly fitted her to understand the interplay of social forces in this country. And it has contributed to her strong skepticism of the tags and labels that are too glibly applied to classes and individuals.

Above all it is her love of human beings, whatever their rank or kind, that illumines Mrs. Vorse's understanding of labor's struggles and labor's victories. One cannot know her, however briefly, without becoming aware of this. It is in her insatiable curiosity, her humor, her courtesy, her tact, and in a kind of gallantry that is so much a part of her.

She has seen a great deal of the history that has been made in the past twenty-five years. She has lived through, often as an active participant, almost every important labor conflict in America during the past two decades. The broad span of her activity since her New England childhood has taken her into every part of the world, into revolution and war and the aftermath of war.

Having spent several long intervals in Europe as a student and a writer Mrs. Vorse knows the European labor movement, too. She was in Europe as war correspondent not long after the outbreak of the World War and went from one war-torn country to another, crossing through neutral countries, from the Allied to the German side, and having extraordinary difficulties and adventures at every border. In 1918 she was a member of the Red Cross and assigned to the Balkan Commission. Then later she was commissioned by the American Relief Administration to go into devastated areas and write about what she saw so that the American public would understand the work that was being done. And after that she went into Russia as a correspondent for one of the news services. She saw and heard Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin.

Between the war and her Russian experience she returned to America and took an active part in the great steel strike of 1919, doing any kind of task that came to hand and watching, with disappointment close to despair, the force of the strike slowly ebb away. After the steel strike had ended in defeat, she went to work organizing employees of shirt factories in small Pennsylvania towns for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. The Amalgamated was then outside the A.F. of L. union and so Mrs. Vorse had to be on guard not only for state troopers but for hostile members of the old line Garment Workers Union. Dodging state troopers was made easier because the friendly telephone operator in the mill town kept Mrs. Vorse, and a fellow organizer, Anne Craton, posted on the whereabouts of the police.

Before the advent of the Committee for Industrial Organization she had made herself an authority on American labor. But unlike many authorities she has known her subject, and many of the principal figures in it, at first hand. They live for her as human beings. With gestures, she recalls an old-time Chicago labor leader who in his late years studied elocution, the result being not altogether happy. He is introducing Mrs. Vorse as the speaker of the evening in the local labor temple: "This old sister (gesture to heaven) has witnessed the immemorial struggles of the working



man (imploratory gesture to the audience) and she knows more about it than any of you birds will ever know. (Fist hammered down on the rostrum.) Yes, a battle-scarred veteran (his arm sweeping in a broad arc in the direction of the slight figure on the platform who waits for this barrage of oratory to subside). . . ."

Mrs. Vorse's study of the C. I. O. has taken her from Florida to Seattle and almost all points in between. It has not been through mere accident that she has been on hand for the most critical happenings of the past five years. An uncanny prescience for what is about to be exciting and important took her to Flint for the sit-down strike in Chevy 4 and she witnessed there the victory of the auto workers with all its drama.

To other reporters on the job there is something a little startling about the way in which Mrs. Vorse manages to find herself in the thick of things. Calm, unhurried, she succeeds nevertheless in arriving at the right place at the right time. Perhaps it is because of the friendships that she has made through the years. While she is a first-rate reporter, she is more than that, more than an observer. Her sympathies are deeply engaged in the struggle that she has witnessed.

During the Republic steel strike in the summer of 1937, Mrs. Vorse's faculty for getting into the thick of things almost proved her undoing. She was at Youngstown, having gone there with the belief that the trouble was now nearly over as the Mediation Commission was already in session in Cleveland. Someone had asked her to go on a picnic being given by the alumni of the local high school. Returning to her hotel after a peaceful afternoon, she learned there had been a disturbance, tear gas and shooting. But it was over now. Nevertheless she wanted to see for herself. Scotty O'Hara, C. I. O. organizer, gave her a lift in his car. They were walking toward the picket line at the main gate of the plant when suddenly gunfire blazed out of the darkness. Mrs. Vorse ran with the others. The impact of a bullet felled her. Scotty O'Hara was trying to help her up, two men more seriously injured were lying on the ground. Blood was streaming down her face. It happened that the wound just

over her eye was deep but not serious. One man had been killed, another gravely injured. That is what can come out of the soft midsummer darkness of an Ohio town.

The focus of her private life for thirty years or more has been an old house at Provincetown, Massachusetts, the picturesque fishing village that has been in part taken over by summer visitors and artists from New York. It was in the storage shed at the end of her fishing wharf that the Provincetown Players put on their first performances. This was a cooperative venture, long before the mass invasion of artists and pseudo-artists. From it came one of the most significant theater histories recorded in this country thus far.

Mrs. Vorse's interests are as varied as the titles of her books, which range from "The Breaking In of a Yachtsman's Wife" to her autobiography, "Footnote to Folly." The folly, incidentally, is not the author's personal folly but that of a war-torn world to which she has written what is indeed a brilliant footnote. But always she has come back to labor's struggle for the right to organize. Calling the roll of the strikes she has been through is to list the battles of a veteran warrior: Lawrence, Paterson, the strike on the Mesaba iron range, the great steel strike of 1919, the Kansas miners, Passaic, Gastonia, and Marion, in 1931 the Kentucky miners. And finally she has followed the rise of the C. I. O.

For those who have had a part in the struggle as well as for those who have stood outside it this book will mean a great deal. The participants have been too preoccupied with immediate tasks to record for the future this significant phenomenon. And what is more they have seen only one part of the nationwide growth of a new kind of unionism. Here is an observer who does not pretend to detachment. She is ardently concerned with the future of the organization that she describes. She has seen it all and she writes of it out of a lifetime of experience, a lifetime that has taken her from a prim Victorian drawing room to the picket lines of America.

Marquis W. Childs

## I. Rubber—The First C. I. O. Strike

THE EMPLOYERS felt safe enough that snowy morning in February, 1936, when a picket line first appeared before the huge Goodyear plant at Akron, Ohio. The rubber workers' union, which had mushroomed to 50,000 under the N. R. A., had dwindled to only a few hundred. Their company union, the Goodyear Industrial Assembly, was one of the best in the country. Officials felt strong and secure enough for a campaign of "rawhiding" that brought the speed-up to a new high — after which the piece rates were cut. Now Goodyear was resuming the eight-hour shift, with resulting layoffs.

They say that the first three men who got the pink slips swore and sat down and in ten minutes the department refused to work. It seemed to the workers a strategic moment for a "showdown with Goodyear."

C. D. Leslie, a sit-downer, but not then a union member, made the now historic remark on returning from a meeting with the management,

"I favor shutting her down!"

The small union membership they had when they struck in the midst of a snow storm increased. Great picket lines marched in front of the plant, turning back shift after shift until the shutdown was complete. This was the first big strike since the C. I. O. had been formed in November, three months before. John L. Lewis made his first C. I. O. speech for the rubber workers and it helped put courage into them for their battle.

From the start, the C. I. O. cooperated with the rubber workers, giving them both organizational and financial help. When the

United Rubber Workers endorsed the strike, the C. I. O. representative was already on the scene and had advised this action. The young union was soon reinforced by organizers lent by the C. I. O. These organizers, from the United Mine Workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Oil Workers, and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, infused Akron strikers with the strength of their own groups and brought a new sense of unity to the struggle.

It was not only the rubber workers' strike; it stretched out to the oil workers, the garment workers, the mine workers. It was their strike as well as the rubber workers' — their organizers were there, their war chests were behind the rubber workers. The force and power of these other unions flowed through the new union.

There was unity at last in the labor movement — labor seeing its struggles not as isolated conflicts but as part of a great forward thrust. Each victory was a victory for all. This feeling of unity was the C. I. O.'s great power, for without a constitution it was a more closely integrated organization than the A. F. of L. had ever been. The pooling of resources and experience had resulted in a delicately integrated organism. A success or a setback in one industry was felt sympathetically throughout the whole organization.

Like all great movements within the C. I. O., the rubber strike was a democratic urge coming from the rank and file. Throughout the C. I. O. unions there has been this mixture of democratic initiative tempered by experienced leadership.

The C. I. O., a new vital force, had been born in the labor movement, and it was showing its power, its ingenuity, and its inventiveness in Akron.

The rubber workers had struck for a reason that one of the leaders mentioned in a radio talk: "The two agitators in this strike are Goodyear hours and wages. They are native products. They were not imported from Moscow." These are the usual agitators. In November, 1935, and January, 1936, wage cuts had led to brief

sit-downs. It was in rubber that the first twenty-four hour sit-down occurred and that the sit-down appeared as a conscious policy.

Within a short time 10,000 workers were back in the union; and all these 10,000 had to be fed and had to be integrated into the strike. In the second week police tried to break the picket line. The union threw masses of workers in front of the plant. The police did not attack. No disorder occurred. The sheer weight of numbers, of quietly exhibited force, had prevented violence so effectively that the Department of Labor's report spoke of it as a strike with singularly little violence.

The union told its story to the workers and to the public — told it over the air, told it in the papers. It explained the Goodyear Company's financial position. Stock had been pyramided until shares had split ninety-six for one; net profit for 1935 was five and a half million dollars; President Litchfield's salary was \$81,000 a year; yet in spite of this the company was proposing a layoff caused by a longer day. The general public in Akron became convinced of the justice of the workers' fight.

This appeal to the public was only one of the ways in which were foreshadowed the new strike techniques which were to reach new heights in autos: Leo Krzycki, Amalgamated organizer, told me that the use of radio prevented a serious conflict which might easily have ended in massacre.

"Goodyear," he said, "had openly organized mobs and when reports came in that the mob was to march on the picket line, we engaged a radio station from eleven at night until eight in the morning and told our forces to stand by their radios while we gave them news of what was going on. All night long the workers of the city of Akron sat by their radios, ready to march to the picket line, listening to the news flashes. Messages of approval, which came from all over the country from as far west as Colorado, were read to the radio audience. All night we entertained those listening with songs and music."

Tents were extensively used to shelter pickets. Men watched

day and night around the eleven-mile picket line circuit. There were picket captains for each group of ten. "Better housing programs," broadcast to the workers, brought contributions of radios, couches, and safer stoves to furnish the tents.

When the Law and Order League was started, along the lines made familiar by No. 1 strikebreaker, Pearl Bergoff, the union sent out a call to all war veterans in the industry to be ready to protect the pickets. Within two hours the ex-servicemen were drilling in their headquarters ready to march into the strike zone.

Again and again during the labor conflicts of the next months, the tactic of assembling great numbers of workers was used. Sheer weight of numbers tended to keep the peace in automobile towns, in oil fields, in whatever place labor was asking for recognition, for its right to form unions and bargain collectively.

When the time came for settlement in Goodyear, the value of an organization like the Committee for Industrial Organization again proved itself. The employers were reluctant to come to an agreement. At the same moment when the union was pointing out that the strike had not reached its peak, and the Central Labor Union was ready to call out other unions to help the rubber workers, powerful friends on the Committee for Industrial Organization were working in Washington. As a union pamphlet put it:

"Persons influential in the Goodyear setup were told that the use of force in Akron would not help sales. *There was no use making goods, it was pointed out, unless they could be sold. And if workers were killed in front of the Goodyear gates, labor men would not buy Goodyear tires or autos equipped with them.*"

The idea of a consumer boycott on a large scale was one of the many new C. I. O. tactics, based on the realization that a large part of the buying public is composed of workers or people sympathetic to labor.

Before the C. I. O. the story of rubber had been the story of steel, of autos, of glass, of many other industries. The movement which finally became the C. I. O. received its initial impetus from the N. R. A., for this attempt to grapple with depression problems



which had engulfed the workers of this country was in part an effort to strengthen labor's position and gain a better balance for the forces of industrial life.

Workers who had been intimidated and discriminated against by open shop employers and who had been afraid of losing their jobs now felt that their government was behind their desire for organization, and they joined the unions by hundreds of thousands. Federal unions grew from 307 in 1932 to 1,788 in 1934. The increase in union membership was a spontaneous thing. This stir among the workers was nationwide. Signal successes were achieved among mine workers and garment workers. In the mass industries, such as rubber, autos, and steel, a large new membership arose. Those who thought the Blue Eagle had laid a china egg in 7A were mistaken, for from it was hatched the powerful C. I. O.

The rubber workers typified a national response to the New Deal and the early promise of N. R. A. Membership in the A. F. of L. union in Akron rose swiftly to a peak of 50,000. But as time went on, the rank and file grew dissatisfied with the narrow craft union approach. Various raids by A. F. of L. unions claiming jurisdiction over certain groups destroyed the new membership. Interest waned and changed to bitter disillusionment as Blue Eagle labor boards failed to function properly. Membership began to shrink and declined steadily until in February, 1936, the union at Goodyear had only two hundred dues-paying members.

The discouragement which showed itself in this pronounced loss of union strength in rubber was typical of what happened over the country. It reflected both the stimulation given to labor by the N. R. A. and the futility of craft union organization for the mass production industries. The old A. F. of L. fabric could not be stretched to fit the work pattern of our modern industrial setup. Within two years six hundred federal unions had been discontinued or suspended by the A. F. of L. There was a flight from the unions.

Meantime another sort of "union" membership was swelling. These were the unions under the employer's representation plan, or company unions. This type of union membership, which increased

to 2,500,000 in 1934 from 1,500,000 in 1933, was to prove a boomerang.

In a small compass all the elements which were to form the epic history of the C. I. O. were present in Akron during the rubber conflict. The strike was won. The workers gained a thirty-six hour week, seniority rights, substantial wage raises and better working conditions throughout the industry, with over one hundred wage agreements, including agreements with the Big Three. Victories in Goodyear were followed by victories in Goodrich and Firestone. By the time the Atlantic City conference of the C. I. O. took place, President Dalrymple could report a united union of 75,000 dues-paying members.

On the side of the employers the terror which reached its peak in the strike of Little Steel was foreshadowed. President Dalrymple was ganged up on and beaten savagely by the police when he went to speak to the rubber workers in Gadsden, Alabama, and the back-to-work movements and citizens' committees instigated by detectives were formed. The tire manufacturers, though highly competitive, have a common fund for union crushing, and carried on through the Akron Employers Association. These activities were later exposed by the La Follette Committee. Also in Akron, mistakes were made by the workers which were to be repeated in other localities. The sit-down strike, a strong weapon, was used indiscriminately. The large, new union membership was yet to be disciplined and became impatient at management delays in meeting grievance committees.

The Goodyear strike was followed by the R. C. A. strike in Camden, N. J., and the shipyard workers soon followed these unions into the C. I. O. These two strikes were the trial ground of the C. I. O. They proved the amount of power that lay in the working together of many great unions. The rubber strike in Akron was the first of a series of notable victories which, within a year, changed the status of labor in America.

This altered status, mirrored so clearly in the 1936 election, has



left a lasting imprint on the national scene. In July of 1937, *Business Week* said editorially:

“Akron is from nine months to a year ahead of the national procession in labor recovery. It was in Akron that the Committee for Industrial Organization made its first stand in a big industry, the Goodyear strike . . . Today all the big rubber companies in Akron are dealing across the table with unions.”

Not rubber alone, but a long and formidable list of hitherto untouchable industrial kingdoms were soon invaded by the C. I. O., armed as it is with new techniques, with widespread mass support and a sense of close integration with all labor.

## II. The C. I. O.

### LIST OF C. I. O. INTERNATIONALS

<i>United Rubber Workers of America</i> . . . . .	75,000
<i>Federation of Flat Glass Workers</i> . . . . .	17,000
<i>United Automobile Workers of America</i> . . . . .	375,000
<i>Amalgamated Assn. of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers</i> <i>(S. W. O. C.)</i> . . . . .	525,000 <sup>a</sup>
<i>United Mine Workers of America</i> . . . . .	600,000
<i>United Textile Workers of America</i> <sup>b</sup> . . . . .	400,000
<i>International Ladies Garment Workers Union</i> . . . . .	252,000
<i>Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America</i> . . . . .	180,000
<i>Oil Workers International Union</i> . . . . .	100,000
<i>International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers</i> . . . . .	45,000
<i>United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers</i> . . . . .	140,000
<i>International Woodworkers of America</i> . . . . .	100,000
<i>United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers</i> . . . . .	100,000
<i>Transport Workers Union</i> . . . . .	80,000
<i>International Typographical Union</i> <sup>*</sup> . . . . .	75,500
<i>United Shoe Workers of America</i> . . . . .	50,000
<i>United Retail Employees of America</i> . . . . .	40,000
<i>International Fur Workers</i> . . . . .	35,000
<i>State, County and Municipal Workers of America</i> . . . . .	30,000

<sup>a</sup> That number covered by Steel Workers Organizing Committee (S. W. O. C.) contracts.

<sup>b</sup> Later known as Textile Workers Organizing Committee.

<sup>\*</sup> Considered a C. I. O. union, since its president is prominent in C. I. O., but the union has not (November, 1937) voted to leave the A. F. of L.

<i>United Office and Professional Workers of America . . . . .</i>	25,000
<i>United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers . . . . .</i>	23,900
<i>International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union . . . . .</i>	20,000
<i>International Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers . . . . .</i>	20,000
<i>American Newspaper Guild . . . . .</i>	13,328
<i>Aluminum Workers of America . . . . .</i>	10,000
<i>American Communications Association (formerly American Radio Telegraphists Association) . . . . .</i>	8,000
<i>United Federal Workers of America . . . . .</i>	6,500
<i>National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association . . . . .</i>	6,500
<i>Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians . . . . .</i>	6,000
<i>National Leather Workers Association . . . . .</i>	6,000
<i>National Die Casting League . . . . .</i>	5,000
<i>Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific (provisional) . . . . .</i>	4,500

AN INCALCULABLE FORCE was unleashed by the C. I. O. It was formed November 9, 1936, by eight unions, and its program was the organizing of all labor into industrial unions, at the same time making the workers conscious of their political power.

Its creed was embodied by John L. Lewis in his first radio speech to the workers when he cried, "There is a mighty upsurge of human sentiment now being crystallized in the hearts of thirty million workers who clamor for the establishment of industrial democracy and for a participation in its tangible fruits."

So great was its force, so powerful its impetus that the shouts of C. I. O.! C. I. O.! C. I. O.! sounding like the beat of giant machinery and greeting John L. Lewis at the I. L. G. W. U. convention, only echoed the shout of C. I. O.! throbbing through the whole country.

Five months after this, John Brophy, making a report on the C. I. O.'s progress before the C. I. O. Atlantic City conference of October 4th, could say, "When the Committee was formed two years ago its members did not total one million. Now there are four million. And the demand for organization in the C. I. O. continues

so strong that a membership of four million is merely a passing marker in the steady progress of the C. I. O." There are thirty-two international unions affiliated with it. It had at that time chartered 605 local industrial unions; five state industrial councils, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Montana, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, and seventy-eight city, county, and regional councils. A charter had also been issued to the C. I. O. Maritime Federation of New York, made up of the various maritime unions in that port.

Almost two years to a day from the birth of the Committee for Industrial Organization, and meeting in the same room in Atlantic City where it was formed, a proposal for unity between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. was made. It was a dramatic moment, the climax to the mass movement of the C. I. O. which, in two years, could speak in terms of millions of organized workers, of a billion dollars added to workers' wages, of contracts with employers in the tens of thousands, many of them in industries never organized before.

The accomplishments of the C. I. O. were passed here in review before the old leaders who had formed it, and the young leaders thrown to the surface in the past two years of organization. Indeed this young new leadership showed that some fresh and significant developments had occurred in the labor movement. The A. F. of L. Convention had become a meeting of the middle-aged and elderly. In the C. I. O., the initiative of youth was aided and encouraged by older and experienced leaders. The Committee on Resolutions at the C. I. O. Conference was a sample of this. On the Committee were Lee Pressman, Philip Murray, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, David Dubinsky of the I. L. G. W. U., and Joseph Curran and Homer Martin, the young presidents of the N. M. U. and the dynamic Automobile Workers. The young leaders of the new unions were mingled with such veterans as John Brophy and Philip Murray of the S. W. O. C. The leaders in the new unions had the dynamic quality of true organizers, whether seasoned men like Dalrymple of the rubber workers, or young men like James

Nelson, president of the newly-formed local District 50 of the U. M. W. A. coke by-product chemical workers.

Heading them all was John L. Lewis. To millions of workers he is the symbol of their power. No man in America has been more discussed than the Chairman of the C. I. O. and no one's position more misrepresented. It is true that John Lewis wields enormous power, but he is not a dictator, nor is the C. I. O. a one-man organization. His power rests on his own prestige; it reflects his evaluation in the eyes of his fellow workers. A dictator's power rests on force, but John Lewis, in his capacity of Chairman of the C. I. O., has no police power. He is a force in his own union, and by virtue of the half million dollars given to it by the U. M. W. A., he is a power in the S. W. O. C., but in all other unions Lewis' authority rests only on the weight of his own personality. He can advise, but the newest union within the fold of the C. I. O., though it has been helped by funds and organizers, is as autonomous as any of the powerful older unions such as the United Mine Workers or the International Ladies Garment Workers.

The C. I. O. has achieved such unity that the public generally does not realize the relation of the Washington headquarters to the organization. Here come delegates from unions seeking affiliation, representatives seeking advice, financial aid, organizers. Here rival factions come to solve their difficulties. Campaigns are mapped out, the problems of various unions met, but it is left to the unions themselves to accept or refuse the advice given, whether it comes from the Chief himself or from one of his associates.

During the years, John L. Lewis has grown in stature and each year loomed more important on the public scene. *Time* Magazine grudgingly admitted that if a Number One Citizen were to be named it would be John L. Lewis. The force of his utterances, almost biblical in character, are emphasized by his almost faultless sense of drama, his infallible instinct of timing, never more exemplified than by his unexpected peace proposal at the Atlantic City Conference, where he and the other C. I. O. chiefs saw pass

before them the achievements of their first two years. Impressive as it was to hear of two and a half million workers hitherto unorganized, or a million men now getting vacations with pay, the weight of mere figures told only part of the story.

There has been a social awakening throughout the country, the coming of democracy in towns and industrial valleys where the Bill of Rights, such things as free speech, free assembly, and even the right to vote as one pleased, had been unknown.

The workers have felt their power politically as never before. They have expressed at the polls their wish to have more to say about the government under which they live. Labor candidates have been elected in towns where formerly a worker's job depended on his voting as he had been told.

In its brief history the C. I. O. has gripped the attention of President Roosevelt and the United States Supreme Court. It has swept across the frontiers of Canada, involved the Premier and hastened the fall of cabinet ministers. The magnitude of its unprecedented struggles has engaged the militia and governors of four states. Discussion of the sit-down strike rocked the country and provoked arguments in the Senate and the House that for divergence and violence of opinion were unlike any controversy since abolition days.

The storm over the sit-down strike was less formidable than the attack on labor which followed the decision of the Supreme Court upholding the National Labor Relations Act. And during the strike of Little Steel a campaign of misrepresentation and hate was carried on which for its ferocity equaled that of the Haymarket days.

Born of the organizational genius of this country, American to the core, the C. I. O., inventive and audacious in action, patient in negotiation, in a few brief months re-created the labor movement.

The drama of the automobile strikes was played on a gigantic scale developing immeasurable impetus and power; resourceful, venturesome, using new and old strike methods interchangeably, full of surprises, unexpected in its moves, courageous, and some-



times, as in the letters from the strikers to the governor, weighted with tragedy.

The C. I. O. cut through old conventions, took the shards of unions which had been given their impetus by the N. R. A., and later almost died from disillusionment, and made them into a vital force.

A tremendous breach was made in the walls of the open shop employers. Not only steel, but autos, rubber, aluminum, flat glass, cement, oil, capitulated to collective bargaining, while inroads were made in transport and the utilities. The longshoremen on the Pacific coast and the seamen on the east coast have joined, and the woodworkers have added their young, powerful union of 100,000.

Against its long series of victories it has received only one serious setback. While the defeat in Little Steel was a real one which retarded the C. I. O. and threatened to weaken it permanently, the power of industrial unionism won out. Even during the steel strike the C. I. O. went on rolling up its membership, especially in the great textile drive which has netted 400,000 workers. The workers answered the check of Little Steel and the battering which the C. I. O. received from an implacable press, from members of Congress, from the vigilante committees, and the opposition from the A. F. of L. leadership, by swelling its ranks with new hundreds of thousands, in new unions.

Shifts of depressed workers like the tenant farmers and agricultural workers have been drawn into unions, while the brain and white collar workers, hitherto indifferent to the labor movement, have been aroused.

The white collar workers, of which there are eight million in this country, have tended to identify themselves with management. They are beginning to know better. They have learned during the depression that their problems and labor's are one and the same.

A women's movement has arisen which is the most vigorous expression that the working women of this country have ever known.

The status of the Negro workers has been completely changed.

Kept out of many A. F. of L. unions, the Negro worker will never again be isolated and friendless within the labor movement, for the C. I. O. organizes without regard to color, creed or nationality.

The response to the new unionism was the greatest mass movement labor has ever witnessed in this country. It cannot be said that it was the C. I. O. alone which organized the workers who have stormed into its ranks. The young C. I. O. did not have the means for such accomplishment. A great force like a force of nature had been pent up, partly by the open shop employers, partly by the inadequate form imposed by the A. F. of L. leadership. The C. I. O. undammed a channel through which the "desires and aspirations of millions of workers" could flow.

When the C. I. O. was formed, the labor movement presented a picture of a small island of craft unionists completely surrounded by a sea of millions of unorganized workers, engaged in industries which had been developed in the last thirty years.

The industrial scene which the newly formed C. I. O. looked upon showed 49,000,000 people "gainfully employed," according to the census of 1930. Of these 14,000,000 were employers or professional men, 14,500,000 were farming or in forestry, in commercial work, domestic service and similar occupations including the swollen ranks of white collar workers. There were 20,500,000 industrial workers.

Not only these industrial workers but millions more, hitherto outside the reach of union influence, were logical prospects for organization. When the C. I. O. was launched at least 36,400,000 men and women could properly be called organizable, yet less than 10 per cent of them, 3,186,000, were enrolled in the A. F. of L. And even in its own restricted fields craft unionism, after almost fifty years, had not nearly completed its self-limited task. This is well shown by figures taken from *Photo-History*, No. 2:

147,460 blacksmiths, forge-hammermen

15,000 in the Blacksmith's Union



500,000 steel workers

8,600 in the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and  
Tin Workers

300,000 auto workers

10,000 in the United Automobile Workers Union

170,896 brick, stone masons, tile layers

65,000 in the Bricklayers Union

929,376 carpenters

200,000 in the Brotherhood of Carpenters

280,279 electricians

130,000 in the International Brotherhood of Electrical  
Workers

761,075 machinists, millwrights and toolmakers

92,500 in the International Association of Machinists

519,528 painters

65,600 in the Brotherhood of Painters

85,477 plasterers and cement finishers

18,000 in the International Association of Plasterers

237,813 plumbers, gas and steamfitters

34,000 in the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union

1,082,094 teamsters and chauffeurs

137,000 in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

7,987,000 retail clerks and salesmen

7,200 in the Retail Clerks International Protective  
Association

The explanation of such a record is to be found primarily in the altered economic processes of our time. Modern mass production methods have increasingly ignored and cut across traditional rights

of union jurisdiction. And, equally important, employers have fought steadily to maintain the open shop, using every weapon of force and intimidation at their command. Both the rationalization of industry and the growth of huge corporate structures hindered the development of craft unionism. Automatic machinery, conveyor belts, chain line production, and countless technical innovations have displaced many of the old skills and introduced an almost infinite division of craft work within a single plant. Thus craft unionism has been confronted by an organizational problem that grew more hopelessly complex year by year.

Industrial unionism, making the factory the pivot of all organizational effort, not only furnishes the answer to this problem but gives the workers an essential weapon for collective bargaining. This is the logic behind the C. I. O.'s industrial unionism, a belated recognition of the profound changes that have accompanied mass production and technological advances. A glance at the history and roster of the C. I. O. throws a vivid light on the changes which have occurred in industry.

Within the life span of the A. F. of L., autos have revolutionized not only transportation, but the very way we live. Machinery and the processes of manufacture have been transformed. The great kingdom of oil, with its interlocking service stations, has just begun. The material from which roads are manufactured, the composites, cement, and structural material from which our buildings are fabricated have changed. War material has changed completely. The chemicals covered by the by-products of coal and coke were unknown. The rayon clothing we wear, the very look of peoples' faces has changed and a vast cosmetic industry has appeared. Great amusement industries have sprung up, which include the moving pictures and radio. The way farmers planted and harvested crops has altered radically. New eating habits and a huge canning industry accompanied the change in farming.

During this time the swift pace of agricultural and industrial expansion ranged from coast to coast. As the frontier vanished immigration ceased. New millions pressing for opportunity found the

old doors closed. Western homesteads no longer awaited the pioneer. Increasingly the ownership of land and small business passed into the hands of large scale operators. Management slipped from the hands of ownership, to be taken over by hired executives and salaried employees — a huge new army without a direct stake in the property it managed. A vast white collar class grew up. When the A. F. of L. was born there were only about 650,000 "clerks." Today there are eight million white collar workers.

The world changed faster than its thinking. The old ideas of property remained after property for the many had vanished; when all that remained of property were the clothes a man wore, and the few sticks of furniture he might own. To that, the more fortunate might add an automobile, a radio, and an equity in a house. The tools of his trade had long since passed from him and his business and his land had followed.

In a changing world there was one unchanging thing, fixed as the petrified forest. This was the policy of the American Federation of Labor. It ignored these changes in the ownership of manufacture, these new means of locomotion. It ignored the mushrooming mass industries of a modern world. Faced with an alert, revolutionary, manufacturing group whose chemists and inventors never slept, the A. F. of L. remained static. When manufacturers had vertical production, owning raw material, coal for power, transportation, distribution of the finished product, the A. F. of L. chiefs clung to craft unionism. And because all the members of one craft belonged to a nationwide union it was quite possible for a single craft to strike locally while members of other craft unions in the same plant continued working.

Samuel Gompers, the English cigarmaker, who could dwarf the personalities of a room full of legislators and industrialists, founded and nurtured the American Federation of Labor. Indeed, it might be said he *was* the A. F. of L. for many years. The aims of the A. F. of L. barely changed during fifty-five years of existence, and it continued to have less and less relation to the enormous manufacturing world which it confronted.

The crafts dwindled, the proportion of skilled workmen became smaller year by year. Fifty years ago the commercial workers were one to five, today they are one to three. Craft lines became more and more blurred and jurisdictional disputes increased. The carpenters and the joiners fought and the woodworkers and the sheet metal workers disputed and the plumbers and the steamfitters; and forever one craft was bound by agreements when the other wanted to strike.

The A. F. of L. was a loosely federated group of unions. The Executive Council had little power or money to inaugurate a drive for new membership. Its very form rendered it static. The way it was constituted prevented unity in what it loved to call "the Family of Labor." Individuals were responsible to their own union, not to the A. F. of L.

The small minority of the skilled workers which formed the A. F. of L. clung to the craft unions, which had proven so workable. They had kept their membership. They had seen the rise and fall of various industrial movements.

The historic function of the American Federation of Labor should not be minimized. It should be criticized within its proper frame, namely as the aristocracy of labor. During more than fifty years this organization was *the* labor movement. The part it played in raising wages and shortening hours should never be forgotten. The gains it won for its own membership have been felt indirectly by all workers.

In its lifetime the A. F. of L. has played a constructive role on many occasions, but in common with most social institutions each victory brought an increasing resistance to change. The church, political parties, schools, and business organizations have all shown similar tendencies.

Inevitably, this drift toward conservatism has invited dual movements. The rigid form of the Federation has provoked this very thing. This duality has forever plagued the American Labor movement. Over and over again the same pattern has been re-

peated. Due to the rigidity of structure and the obstinate retention of power of the older leaders, progressives have left the union to form a new group, only to be lopped off by employers as "reds" and to take from the parent union the germinating seed of change of the progressive element.

Yet the A. F. of L. was formed during the most turbulent years of the Knights of Labor, at a time when industrial unionism was the labor movement. But the Knights' unionism lacked any definite program, its very size and diffuseness carried failure within it. It has often been compared to the C. I. O. with which it has nothing in common except enthusiasm. It did not know what it wanted and so it failed, with the detonation of the Haymarket bomb as its death knell.

The emerging A. F. of L. knew what it wanted. It seems strange to think that the chaotic movement of the Knights of Labor should have been succeeded by the neat and tidy Federation of Labor, of which it has been said that like Minerva springing from the brain of Jove, it sprang, full-grown, from the brain of Samuel Gompers.

Industrial unionism continued to haunt the A. F. of L., for the process of industrial unionism, which was never wholly dead, had its roots deep in the labor movement. In 1905, the Western Federation of Miners, a militant industrial union, separated from the American Federation of Labor. From the Western Federation of Miners sprang the I. W. W. which had marked success in many fields and again revived industrial unionism. It lost its power not only through the tremendous wartime persecution, but through its belief that a union can be a revolutionary organization. At different A. F. of L. conventions, like that of 1919, industrial unionism was the chief subject of discussion.

The Trade Union Educational League, founded by William Z. Foster, found response in many quarters in its efforts to amalgamate craft unions. It was born out of a conviction he had held before the steel strike and which the bitter lesson of the steel strike of 1919 had intensified. Under the influence of the T. U. E. L. a pow-

erful movement toward industrial unionism appeared in many of the A. F. of L. unions. Later the Trade Union Unity League fought for industrial unions.

But the A. F. of L. was built to protect the special privileges of restricted groups — skilled workers who looked askance at any program which might endanger their bargaining position by lumping them with unskilled labor. Attempts to induce the A. F. of L. to organize the unorganized failed largely for this reason. Even in the face of a very different labor market this old reluctance still persisted among William Green and his followers.

Moreover, the A. F. of L. greatly weakened its appeal to industrial workers during the prosperous twenties by collaborating with employers in various schemes to increase the workers' efficiency without demanding adequate job security and compensation. The Baltimore and Ohio Plan, for instance, adopted in 1923, brought the permanent discharge of five thousand men. From wartime on, many A. F. of L. leaders pursued a policy which identified their interests with those of employers at the expense of sound trade union principles.

Finally the great gains made in the unions in 1932 and 1933 under the N. R. A., when the workers organized on an industrial basis only to see their unions fall apart when divided into crafts, made the necessity for industrial unionism clear to all who wanted a strong labor movement in this country.

Inside the A. F. of L. forward looking leaders maneuvered to modify the musty policies, inadequate for coping with a great organizational drive. The movement toward industrial unionism had entered its parliamentary stage.

In the A. F. of L. convention in 1933 efforts were made in this direction, but nothing was done. In the San Francisco convention the next year a more vigorous effort was made toward adequate forms of organization. A formula was worked out for the beginning of a great organizational drive in the mass industries, especially steel.

Power to administer such a program was lodged in the Executive



Committee. They neutralized this program and rendered it null by their interpretation. John Brophy described this period well when he said, "The classic struggle occurred between those who were for having something done, and those who were for doing nothing," although the quarrel with the A. F. of L. does not boil down to so simple a formula as those who want to do something against those who don't.

It is even more than a fight for power between two groups. As has been stated, the A. F. of L. is in its essence the guardian of special privileges for a class of skilled workers; before it could organize the unorganized, it would have to change its policy.

At the Atlantic City Convention of 1935 this struggle came into the open and was crystallized by the speeches made by John L. Lewis and by Charles Howard of the Typographers Union. The conflict reached its climax when blows were exchanged between Lewis and Hutcheson, president of the Brotherhood of Carpenters, who typifies the reactionary force of the A. F. of L. This convention ended the first stage of the group which was to join the C. I. O., in which the progressives earnestly tried for successive years to adapt themselves to the framework of the A. F. of L.

The second or organizational phase had been reached. Following the Atlantic City Convention, the C. I. O. was set up on November 9, 1935, with a membership of eight unions.

The C. I. O. opened modest offices in the Rust Building in Washington, D. C. It was headed by a committee composed of the presidents of the eight original unions who founded it, but as it did not expect to function outside of the A. F. of L., it had no by-laws or constitution and was merely an informal grouping. Its chairman was John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers; its director, John Brophy, long known as a progressive in the labor movement. Charles P. Howard of the Typographers Union was its secretary. Len De Caux headed public relations.

The unions pledged themselves \$500,000 for their expected drive toward industrial organization in steel. The Mine Workers and the two great needle trades unions (the Amalgamated Clothing

Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers) bore the greatest part of the burden, the Mine Workers leading.

Mike Tighe, perennial president of the small Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers listened to both the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O.'s proposals for organizing steel, and finally chose the C. I. O.

On June 17, 1936, the steel drive was launched, and with that launching the C. I. O. appeared as a formidable labor force. The steel workers came in at first hesitatingly, in a mere trickle, compared to the flood which was to follow.

Meanwhile, the A. F. of L. bureaucracy was squirming under the continued successes, the evidence of power, of the C. I. O. By July the international unions affiliated had grown from eight to twelve. Then in August, 1936, the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. suspended the affiliated unions of the C. I. O., charging dual unionism and defiance of the majority rule of the Atlantic City Convention.

On the first of January, 1937, the auto workers began their famous sit-down strike. February 11, General Motors settled. On March 2, U. S. Steel bargained with John L. Lewis.

By the middle of March, two huge unions, each with a membership of over 300,000 were the twin pillars of the newly-organized mass industries in the C. I. O.

Meanwhile the A. F. of L. had taken a further offensive against the C. I. O. at the meeting of the Executive Committee in Cincinnati. They had decided to expel C. I. O. members from the central bodies and State Federations, splitting the labor movement and causing a labor battle in every industrial center.

John L. Lewis' speech in Atlantic City at the International Ladies Garment Workers' Convention, where he was greeted by the roar of "C. I. O." was a formal announcement that the Committee for Industrial Organization had entered its third phase. It had regularized its position by stepping out as a separate labor center, issuing charters to State Federations and central labor bodies.

As one surveys the scene of labor in the fall of 1937, it is apparent



that the key and heavy industries are those which have cast their lot with the C. I. O. Steel, mining, oil, autos, key industries of communication and power, food industries, the clothing and textile industries are with the C. I. O. With the A. F. of L. remain the building trades, most of the metal trades, railway transportation exclusive of the Brotherhoods, the secondary industries such as the amusement industries, and the service industries.

While these great organizational drives were going on, labor also entered the political field. Through its efforts the political complexities of whole states were changed. Labor again overwhelmingly gave its mandate to the New Deal.

Those who watch labor's action today feel that in limiting its political efforts, labor was like a man stumping along on one leg; with political action added to economic action, labor runs fleetly on two legs.

Though A. F. of L. bureaucrats tried to prevent it, their members cooperated politically with the C. I. O. in many localities — where the rank and file resisted the pressure of Mr. Green's executive committee.

So great has been the impact of the driving force of the C. I. O. that the A. F. of L. itself has been quickened out of its historic somnolence. Its membership has increased by over 700,000 since April, 1937. It has taken lessons from the C. I. O. The Machinists Union has spread rapidly in aircraft, which it is organizing along industrial lines, taking in all other workers as well as machinists.

And while the A. F. of L. leaders have split the labor movement, have even allowed A. F. of L. unions to take the place of company unions, yet the frequent instances of cooperation and sympathy of many unions show that the rank and file workers know that their problems and their enemy are identical with those of the C. I. O. And when the peace move was proposed, a cheer went up all over the country from A. F. of L. workers, voiced in numerous resolutions.

From the struggle of this past year, labor has emerged with a vastly increased prestige, a new status. A new dynamic force has

been born whose impetus is beyond anything before known in the labor movement. A new social climate has resulted.

And what has happened is American in its essence. The new power which blew through the labor movement had the bold practicality which has ever been the genius of this country. In the C. I. O. the old adventurous spirit of America was reborn in labor.

Shifts of thought have occurred during this struggle which are so vast that no one has as yet analyzed their far-reaching implications.

The legislation of this country has been a progressive recognition of this changed conception of ownership. Through its laws and the control and regulation of utilities, government has by implication asserted that big business is public business.

A new conception of property was involved by the striker quietly sitting at his machine and saying mutely, "This job is mine. You have taken from me my tools and my control of the machine, but nevertheless, I have a vested interest in this machine. It is my job. It is all I have and all that my wife and children have, and I will protect it with my life."

The worker, sitting beside his machine guarding it, has made no claim to own that machine, but is making a claim to a property right in his job. By this he has challenged the old feudal order. He has disputed the despotic control of management over workers, its right to hire and fire at will.

To this changed status, the upholding of the National Labor Relations Board by the Supreme Court has contributed greatly. The appalling revelations of the La Follette Committee have shown the astonished public what weapons the employers use to prevent labor from organizing, and that certain employers do not even stop at murder.

But the impetus given labor under N. R. A., the Supreme Court decision, the National Labor Relations Board, the La Follette Committee, a President favorable to labor's aims, would all have been in vain without the million marching feet: labor in a thousand

towns and factories demanding organization and going into the conflict with new techniques, with new spontaneous inventions, with a brilliant suppleness of combat hitherto unimagined.

A new evaluation of labor's place will have to be made by federal and state legislatures, the courts, and the civil authorities. From now on, historians will have to concede to the organization of labor its place as one of the great processes of democracy. Society will have to recognize the "mighty upsurge of human sentiment now being crystallized in the hearts of thirty million workers who clamor for the establishment of industrial democracy and for a participation in its tangible fruits."

### THEY WILL NOT BARGAIN

*It is evident, therefore, that there can be at best only a benevolent despotism where collective action on the part of the employees does not exist.*

*A great deal of testimony has been introduced to show that employers who refuse to deal collectively with their workmen do in fact grant audiences at which the grievances of their workmen may be presented. One is repelled rather than impressed by the insistence with which this idea has been presented. Every tyrant in history has on stated days granted audiences to which his faithful subjects might bring their complaints against his officers and agents. That justice was never secured under such conditions, except at the whim of the tyrant, is sure. It is equally sure that in industry justice can never be attained by such a method.*

*The last point which needs to be considered in this connection is the attitude frequently assumed by employers that they are perfectly willing to deal with their own employees collectively, but will resist to the end dealing with any national organization. The underlying motives of such statements seem to be that as long as organizations are unsupported from outside they are ineffective and capable of being crushed with ease and impunity by discharging the ringleaders. Similarly, the opposition to the representation of their employees by persons outside their labor force seems to arise wholly from the knowledge that as long as the work-*

*ers' representatives are on the payroll they can be controlled, or if they prove intractable they can be effectually disposed of by summary dismissal.*

*These investigations have shown that under the best possible conditions, and granting the most excellent motives on the part of employers, freedom does not exist either politically, industrially, or socially, and that the fiber of manhood will inevitably be destroyed by the continuance of the existing situation.\**

\* Final Report of the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations — 1912.

### III. The Cost of the Open Shop

THOSE MILLIONS of workers whose aspirations Lewis voiced were confronted by the open shop employers, who, until the advent of the C. I. O., had resisted all organization in the mass industries. For the first time they faced a labor movement which saw itself as unified as they themselves were in their fight against labor.

The bloodiest battle ever fought in the industrial field is the battle for the open shop. Its object is and always has been to keep all labor organizations out of industry. The cost of the open shop to the public, to the workers, to stockholders, is impossible to compute. The figures do not exist. But the events of the past months throw a horrifying silhouette against the wall of history.

The slaughter of Ludlow, Colorado, in 1913 — where two men and eleven boys were shot to death, and thirteen women and children suffocated beneath the burning tents set alight by the state troopers is not far removed from Republic's slaughter of eighteen workers during the brief period of the 1937 strike in Little Steel. The Iron and Steel Institute was back of both. They are all part of one battle. It is yet to be proved whether John L. Lewis was right or wrong when he stated that the time when workers can be slaughtered, gassed, shot, and imprisoned with impunity had passed.

What may be a decisive battle in a conflict which is as old as the employers' effort to crush labor is now in progress. On the one hand is the power of the workers pouring into the new channels created for them by the industrial unionism of the C. I. O., their right to organize for the first time upheld by Federal law, and on the other are the open shop employers. Every effort is being made

during the current recession to take from labor the gains it has made in legislation as well as in organization during the past two years.

Looking through the pages of history, we find that the great struggles of the workers have not been for hours and wages alone, but for union recognition. The bloodiest and the most violent strikes have had this aim. The railway strikes of the late eighties, the Homestead strike of 1892, were strikes for recognition of the union.

In coal the great bituminous strikes of 1897 and the anthracite coal strikes of 1900 and 1903 had the same cause. The Bethlehem strike in 1910, the textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912, and the succeeding textile strikes in Paterson in 1913, demanded union recognition. The great mining strikes in Idaho and Colorado and the early garment workers' strikes in 1910, all were caused by the employers' refusal to bargain with labor. And during the interval that preceded the great steel strike of 1919 this same issue gave rise to a long series of disputes, as it did in the period leading up to the great textile strike of 1934 and, of course, the 1937 strike in Little Steel.

The cost to the country, to the workers, of this open shop policy can scarcely be placed too high. We have seen that by the failure of industry to bargain with the worker, a perpetual wave of industrial unrest has been kept alive. The cost of the open shop may be summed up under these categories:

Workers killed in industrial disputes, taken for rides, murdered and sometimes mutilated

Workers wounded and gassed

Workers jailed

The money cost of this in:

Federal troops, National Guardsmen, United States Marshals, Deputies, extra police

Special police forces, e.g., railway police, coal and iron police  
Add tear gas and ammunition purchased for industrial plants;  
the cost of strikebreakers and industrial espionage (this,



alone, is estimated at \$80,000,000 a year); man-days lost by strikes for collective bargaining, and the loss to industry through such strikes.

Add, too, the cost of propaganda to keep unions from organizing. A half million was spent for one advertisement by U. S. Steel. Add the cost of the Company union, which in the steel country amounted to hundreds of thousands a year.

There are no figures to show how many lives have been lost in this open shop fight, or how many workers have been wounded, how many arrested or how many days were spent in jail by workers who had attempted to exercise their constitutional rights. To keep an open shop, to keep workers from organizing, armed troops, both of the Federal government and of the National Guard, have tramped over every state in the union.

Active and direct support of "property rights" has frequently come from local officials, judges, district attorneys, etc., often in actual collusion with the companies. Harlan County, Kentucky, is a notable example. There, according to the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee, Deputy Sheriff White accompanied a gang which shot and killed a son of a United Mine Workers' organizer and wounded his mother and sister *in their own home*; Deputy Sheriff Middleton had been indicted for six major crimes; Commonwealth Attorney Daniel Boone Smith drew a monthly salary from three coal companies; mine guards killed a union member on April 4, 1937; Ben Unthank got a monthly stipend of \$150 from the Harlan County Coal Operators' Association to act as "head road killer" and his salary and expenses were \$23,000 for the month of February, 1937. The list might be extended almost indefinitely.

Armies and armed strikebreakers have marched against workers in the name of law and order. Industrial plants, like those of steel, have become arsenals. The infamous coal and iron police were created to keep workers in subjection.

No one has computed the man-days' work lost through these practices, or what such strikes have cost the worker in time lost in wages, the community in relief, the stockholder in lost sales.



One can, however, give a sample. The number of man-days lost because of strikes in 1934 was 19,306,650.

Man-days lost in strikes in 1935 were 15,014,029.

Of these strikes 46 per cent were for union recognition in 1934, and over 50 per cent in 1935.

Figuring on the basis of the four-dollar-a-day scale, the loss in wages would be \$63,580,052. Of the havoc wrought by this union-baiting policy, these are but samples.

No one knows how many men's lives have been wrecked because of the blacklist, how many homes have been lost, how many children undernourished. The country has not ceased to shudder over the victims of Ludlow, the boys who were shot, the babies who were smothered. But what about those others who starved because their fathers were blacklisted and could find no work, and what about the children who lived in tent colonies on hillsides, as the miners did in West Virginia? They were asking for union recognition. How they were murdered by thugs and shot at by militia is a story so appalling that it does not seem possible that it could happen in America, had there not been the recent example of Harlan.

Let us examine some of these labor-smashing methods in detail. A monstrous spy system has been built up for the sole purpose of preventing unionism. There are 230 known agencies. Heber Blenkenhorn of the National Labor Relations Board has computed that the minimum cost of the undercover operatives in the United States is \$80,000,000. Chrysler paid Corporations Auxiliary, for undercover operatives in 1935, \$72,611.89. General Motors paid the Pinkertons alone, \$419,850.10 from January, 1934 through July, 1936, and they paid close to \$1,000,000 for all the agencies that they hired.

These sums are passed on to you and me, for they are counted as "operating expenses," just as workers' wages are called "direct costs." Thus the general public pays, in higher prices, for the spies who poison the life of industrial towns.

It is a horrible thing to live in a community where every act is

spied upon. It is a horrible thing to live where an incautious word, or the expression of an opinion, may cost you your job. And it is a wonderful thing to see a town freed from this espionage.

The money cost borne by the general public, including the very men and women who are spied upon, is only a little of the cost. The cost in morale, in living, in human decency is far higher. The cost to the men who spied, to the unfortunate workers who were "hooked" and who became stool pigeons, is worse. This cost is incalculable. I have been in the steel towns and gone with organizers to the houses of workers. Here I have realized that every knock on the door meant terror. Women looking out through a crack, denying their husbands were home, denying their very names. A whole town perpetually on its guard, fearing the face of any stranger.

The majority of us in America live in small towns, in little democratic communities. We can express any opinion we wish. We can belong to any civic organization, or any church we want to. It is very hard for people who have never lived under the shadow of espionage to realize how poisonous, how demoralizing a blight goes over a town where neighbor distrusts neighbor and worker must be on his guard against worker.

George Patterson, a steel worker, told the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee: "There is an espionage system in the steel plants. It is common talk among the employees at all times. They know it and they feel it. They feel that at all times they are being watched. As we tried to organize men, a man would say, 'We would like to come in, but it is as much as our job is worth to join up.' They have said that many times."

The effect upon business itself was apparent. Roger Babson, the conservative economist, warned employers in 1923:

There are a score or more of these industrial spy agencies at work in the country. They act under all kinds of names which give no hint of their real work. Immense sums are paid to them by our employers.

This is a serious blunder on the part of corporation leaders. It stirs up trouble where none exists. It is the most potent breeder of radicalism that we have. . . . The "boring from within" which radical agitators are charged with, is a drop in the bucket to the boring that the industrial spy does for money which the employer pays. These spy agencies set out to find rottenness, and if they do not actually find it, some make it or fake it.

This poisoning of the very wellspring of social life is one of the prices paid for the open shop.

The detective agencies not only furnish spies, but also they furnish strikebreakers. How much does it cost to break a strike? How many millions of dollars have been paid to frustrate the workers' desire to form unions and settle their disagreements with their employers through decent negotiations? The figures that the employers have paid strikebreakers, to hired gunmen, and to Pinkertons is almost incredible. The prices paid in some individual strikes have been computed, for instance:

American Bridge spent \$289,462 on detective agencies to stop unionism on the Pulaski Skyway in Jersey City. By employing non-union men, they saved \$51,849. The entire cost was \$237,613.

The men who are employed in such "protective work" are armed killers, many of them with criminal records, who have been recruited through the years to break strikes. They are the backbone of the "Back-to-Work" movements.

Recently the employment of strikebreakers has been superseded by the use of the Citizens Committees, which, during the recent steel strike, we have seen emerging on a national scale. A new and complete strikebreaking technique has been invented, which will be dealt with later in detail. The idea, of course, is to prevent collective bargaining, to smash the workers' organization and to thwart the urge of the workers toward industrial democracy, an industrial democracy now upheld and fostered by the government of the United States.

All these costs, the millions for espionage, the tear gas and the "Tommy" guns, the deputies, the vigilantes, the expensive press agents, the propaganda factories, these charges are all handed back to the consuming public. We pay for them. It is our money that goes into poisoning a community with spies and stool pigeons. It is our money that pays for our own misinformation, helps preserve the open shop and defeats the law of the federal government.

The story of the open shop is an old story. Manufacturers began early to form associations for the purpose of weakening and preventing the organization of labor.

We can see spread through the country such organizations as the powerful Iron and Steel Institute, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Industrial Conference Board, the strong National Metal Trades Association, the National Electric Manufacturing Association, and many similar ones.

These nationwide associations are supported by numerous local organizations, such as the California Merchants' Association, the Association of Indianapolis Employers, a similar association for Seattle and many other states, not to mention the extra help given by innumerable chambers of commerce.

These powerful manufacturers' associations control credit. Their interlocking directorates and holding companies control business, and business policies toward labor; they post bonds for the fulfilling of employer association agreements.

One of the first employers' associations was founded in Cincinnati in 1866, the National Stove Manufacturers and Iron Founders Association. When the iron molders struck as a result of a 60 per cent wage cut, they lost their strike after nine months. The employers had proven the worth of the manufacturers' association for crushing labor.

The National Metal Trades Association, formed in 1901 as the result of difficulties with union workers, has never wavered in its open shop policy — a policy which was enforced upon all members by this constitutional decree:

"In the conduct of labor difficulties, members must proceed in

the manner which the constitution and by-laws prescribe . . .” Early in 1937, 952 leading firms in the industry were bound by this agreement. They paid regular dues into a common strikebreaking fund (balance \$214,928 in November, 1936), supplied a common pool of scab labor and exchanged information on blacklisted personnel. This blacklist has been maintained since 1901. The Association has a long record of anti-union activities that compares favorably with the better-known accomplishments of Pearl Bergoff, Railway Audit, and other such agencies. Significantly, during all this period, these closely integrated employer groups based their anti-union drive on the need for independent action by free workingmen, while no individual firm was permitted to bargain with its own labor.

The Citizens Industrial Association formed in 1902 was one of the ablest of its day in creating anti-labor public opinion. Thirty-five years ago they made the same phony appeal to Americanism and patriotism as do employers today. That hardy perennial was as effective then as it is now. So successful were the efforts of the association that at their third annual convention, the president, C. W. Post, could announce:

Two years ago the press and pulpit were delivering platitudes about the oppression of the workingman. Now all that has been changed since it has been discovered that the enormous Labor Trust is the heaviest oppressor of the independent workingman as well as the common American citizen. The people have become aroused and are now acting. It has been the duty of this association to place the facts before the people by various forms of publicity in the work of molding public opinion to a point of active self-defense.

To accomplish the end of keeping the workers' legitimate grievances from the public, the services of preachers, writers, and educators had been enlisted, which included such eminent men as Charles H. Eliot, president of Harvard College, who in an article for *Harpers' Magazine* (March, 1905) spoke with enthusiasm of the

"independent American worker" — who remained on the job during strikes.

And President Eliot spoke from a deep conviction, for the open shop had a philosophy and an economic theory to fit it. The economic theory of Hickok and his school was taught in every college in the land. It was from a similar conviction that John D. Rockefeller, Jr., exclaimed after the Ludlow disaster that he preferred to spend every penny he had rather than deny his workers their liberty of not belonging to a union. Every man was "free" to make his own contract. Each individual worker was "free" to bargain with his employer. In this philosophy the free worker made free contracts with a free employer and the union appeared as the outside agitator which poisoned this happy relationship.

So the open shop groups continued their anti-labor policy unchecked until the World War, when the employers pledged themselves not to interfere with labor's right to organize. Under the War Labor Board, organization increased until the American Federation of Labor had a membership at its peak of 4,078,740.

Soon after the end of the war, a new open shop drive was started, taking advantage of the depression of the early twenties. As a result, union membership dropped to 2,865,799 in two years.

The failure of the steel strike, in 1919, strengthened the open shop drive. The Metal Trades Association made an agreement to support the open shop. The National Association of Manufacturers, the National Metal Trades Association, and other employers' groups sent organizers through the country forming state and city associations of employers and manufacturers for the purpose of crushing labor and maintaining the open shop. These organizations operated under many different names such as The American Plan Open Shop Conference, the Southwest Open Shop Association, the American Plan League.

They had a single object, the crushing of labor.

At this time, too, the courts were used more and more in fighting labor. The abuse of the injunction finally led to the passage of the Norris-La Guardia Act, limiting the use of injunctions.



The open shop drive was successful. Why not? The powerful Manufacturers Associations presented a united front and a unified program. The workers, split into craft unions, made no progress. As a result even the prosperity of 1929 found only 2,933,545 organized in the American Federation of Labor.

This drive against the workers went on in spite of the fact that for a hundred years the government of the United States had acknowledged the constitutional right of the workers to organize. Twice in times of national peril the government had upheld this basic right in law: once in wartime, under the War Labor Board, again during the depression under the N. I. R. A.

The government has also, from time to time, appointed great industrial commissions to inquire into the causes of industrial unrest. On these commissions, senators, cabinet ministers, and great jurists served. The most responsible, able, and respected men have testified that for industrial peace we must have collective bargaining. Over and over, we find such statements as this:

However men may differ about the propriety and legality of labor unions we must all recognize the fact that we have them with us to stay, to grow more numerous and powerful. Is it not wise to fully recognize them by law, to admit their necessity as labor guides and protections, to conserve their usefulness, increase their responsibility, and to prevent their follies and aggressions by conferring upon them the privilege enjoyed by companies, with like proper restrictions and regulations? The growth of corporate power and wealth has been the marvel of the past fifty years. It will not be surprising if the marvel of the next fifty years be the advancement of labor to a position of like power and responsibility. We have heretofore encouraged the one and comparatively neglected the other. Does not wisdom demand that each be encouraged to prosper legitimately and to grow into harmonious relations of equal standing and responsibility before the law? (p. xlviii.)



This sounds as though it might have been written yesterday. It was not. It was the report of The Industrial Commission appointed by President Cleveland in 1894, over forty years ago. It was especially appointed to inquire into the breaking of the railway strike, when not only numerous and broadside injunctions in behalf of the government were issued by the federal courts, but 1,936 federal troops were ordered out by President Cleveland and some 5,000 deputy marshals were appointed by the United States Marshal.\*

In 1912, Congress created a Commission of Industrial Relations which held hearings for six months throughout the country. It found that one of the major causes of industrial unrest was the denial of the right of workers to organize. Divergent as the members of the Commission were on many points, they joined unanimously in recommending collective bargaining. The report of Basil M. Manley, Director of Research and Investigation, stated that in the "century-long struggle [for organization], almost insurmountable obstacles are placed in the way of the workers using the only means by which economical and political justice can be secured, namely, combined action through voluntary organization. The workers insist that this right of organization is fundamental and necessary for their freedom, and that it is inherent in the general rights guaranteed every citizen of a democracy."

Why, when the greatest statesmen of the country have repeatedly emphasized labor's right to bargain, have these things been allowed to go on? Why, when the government of the United States has a law upholding the right of the worker to bargain collectively

\*In considering the causes of the Pullman strike, the Commission of 1894 found that: "The Pullman Company is hostile to the idea of conferring with organized labor in the settlement of differences arising between it and its employees." (p. xxv.)

"The company," it says, "does not recognize that labor organizations have any place or necessity in Pullman, when the company fixes wages and rents, and refuses to treat with labor organizations. The laborer can work or quit on the terms offered, that is the limit of his rights. This position secures all the advantages of the concentration of capital, ability, power, and control for the company in its labor relations and deprives the employees of any such advantage or protection as a labor union might afford. In this respect the Pullman Company is behind the age." (p. xxvi.)

with his employer, do these abuses persist? Why does the public allow, without action, such things as the Chicago massacre?

The answer to this is that there has been, and still is, a constant influencing of public opinion on a national scale. The chambers of commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, etc., have control of the means of publicity.

In this age-long fight of property rights over human rights, the general public hears over the radio, reads in public prints, declarations which contain a barrage of criticism of the union. These criticisms lead average citizens, even those who live in an industrial community, to believe that labor leaders draw fat salaries; that labor leaders are racketeers; that huge sums of money are accumulated in union funds which are then squandered or dishonestly disbursed; that the union is used to intimidate the non-union worker and take from him his "right-to-work."

Another set of criticisms has to do with the new labor legislation. The average person has an idea that labor has been given rights and privileges over employers and the public without having a counteracting safeguard of responsibilities and duties. These beliefs have become almost universal. Ask any chance-met person of your acquaintance what he thinks of labor unions and one or another of these criticisms is sure to come up.

Why should the man in the street be so sure that labor leaders, as a class are greater racketeers than, for instance, bank presidents? Why should he be so readily convinced that union funds are squandered and used dishonestly? Where did these ideas originate? The answer is simple. The National Association of Manufacturers is, as one of its officers says, "The most powerful body of businessmen which has ever been organized in any land or in any age." Besides influencing legislation, working for the laws which help business, and carrying on a powerful lobby against laws which threaten the power of business, it concerns itself with influencing what you and I and the rest of the reading public think about unions.

There is probably no home in America to which its message is not carried through one of its many avenues. Listen to the report

of its Chairman of Public Relations Committee, Harry A. Bullis, as given at the Convention, November 8, 1936:

*Press* — Industrial Press Service — reaches 5,300 weekly newspapers every week.

Weekly cartoon service — sent to 2,000 weekly newspapers.

“Uncle Abner Says” — comic cartoon appearing in 309 daily papers with a total circulation of 2,000,000 readers.

“You And Your Nation’s Affairs” — daily articles by well known economists appearing in 260 newspapers with a total circulation of over 4,500,000.

Factual bulletin — monthly exposition of industry’s viewpoint sent to every newspaper editor in the country.

For foreign-born citizens — weekly press service, translated into German, Hungarian, Polish, and Italian, printed in papers with a total circulation of almost 2,500,000.

Nationwide advertising — 6 full page ads about the “American System” of which over 500 newspapers have carried one or more.

*Radio* — “The American Family Robinson” — program heard from coast to coast over 222 radio stations once a week, and over 176 stations twice a week.

Foreign language — 1,188 programs in 6 languages over 79 radio stations.

*Movies* — Two 10-minute films for general distribution, seen by over 2,000,000 people.

*Public Meetings* — 70 meetings featuring 8 professional speakers.

*Employee Information Service* — *Leaflets* — a series of 25 distributed to over 11,000,000 workers.

*Posters* — over 300,000 of a series of 24 for bulletin boards in plants throughout the country.

*Films* — 10 sound slide films for showing in plants.

*Outdoor advertising* — 60,000 billboard ads scheduled for 1937.

*Pamphlets* — “You and Industry Library” — over 1,000,000 copies of a series of seven pamphlets distributed to libraries, colleges, businessmen, lawyers, and educators.

Mr. Bullis said on the convention floor, “I am always amazed at its completeness and the way in which it reaches into every section of the country and all strata of society.”

Small wonder that such perverted views prevail on the subject of unionism.

Yet slowly, slowly, a social consciousness has developed. Child labor is frowned on by most churches, and many states restrict it by law. Legislation has reflected public opinion on the subject of industrial disease. The depression has caused an awakening of the public to the fact that the victims of unemployment must be provided for by state and federal agencies.

The idea that employers have a responsibility toward their workers as well as their stockholders is gaining ground and there are practically no employers who will say outright that they do not believe in collective bargaining, even when they maintain private armies and arsenals to prevent it.

The Industrial Commission of 1912, which found that the greatest cause for industrial unrest was the denial of the right to bargain, stated that of the 230 representatives of the interests of employers who were questioned, less than half a dozen denied the propriety of collective action on the part of employees. “A considerable number of these witnesses have, however, testified that they denied in practice what they admitted to be right in theory.” And so Tom Girdler states that he bargains with labor, while eighteen lie dead because he will not, and open shop employers everywhere have hailed him as a great man.

The open shop campaign goes on. The detective agencies and munitions factories still flourish — and what the final report of the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations stated in 1912, a quarter of a century ago, is still applicable today:

The fundamental question for the Nation to decide, for in the end public opinion will control here as elsewhere, is whether the workers shall have an effective means of adjusting their grievances, improving their condition, and securing their liberty, through negotiation with their employers, or whether they shall be driven by necessity and oppression to the extreme of revolt.

A growing labor movement, united around the progressive aims of the C. I. O., has proposed a peaceful solution of this century-old problem. This proposal was reinforced by the passage of the Wagner Act now upheld by the Supreme Court. It remains for the employers to abolish their open shop program with its spies and arsenals.

## IV. Steel Organizes

THE SETTING UP of the C. I. O. was the first effective organization against the open shop. The forming of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee made its first great appearance on July 5, 1936, at its first mass meeting held in Homestead. Thousands of people assembled to commemorate the killing of steel workers in 1892 by armed forces hired by the mills. At that time the famous Pinkertons came up the river on barges, which in turn were set on fire by the workers. It was Carnegie's declaration of war upon unionism, the beginning of the wide, open shop drive which was to hold labor in the mass industries captive for almost two generations.

The great crowd which gathered July, 1936, in honor of the victims of 1892 was addressed by the Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. William Kennedy, former United Mine worker. An old man, who had taken part in the strike and was a friend of the victims, found the graves.

It was a new thing for steel workers to have a great open mass meeting in Homestead; a new thing to have a Lieutenant-Governor address them and tell them that he would uphold their civil liberties, and assure them relief if they were dismissed for union activities, for Homestead was one of the towns which had been closed to union workers for years. Not long before, Secretary of Labor Perkins was not allowed to hold a meeting when she wished to address the steel workers, but had to speak to them from the post office, that is United States Government property.

A new day was to come for the steel workers. The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers had accepted the C. I. O.'s offer to organize them at the Canonsburg Convention in



April. On June 3 in Washington a memorandum of agreement was signed between the Amalgamated and the C. I. O., which embodied the procedure and organizational provisions for the steel organizing campaign.

On June 17, John Lewis set up the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and the first meeting was held in Pittsburgh. The C. I. O. had launched its first great drive which was to change the position of labor in this country. It moved into the Pittsburgh district with a \$500,000 fund behind it and established itself on the 36th floor of the Grant Building. From there one looks down upon what is known as the Golden Triangle where the Allegheny and Monongahela join to form the Ohio River.

There is no spot where one may so fully realize the might and power of the steel industry. From every side, down every river, rise the black chimneys. At night the skies are aglow with the blast of the furnaces and by day the smoke rolls up in great convoluted clouds. The office gave the effect of a stable organization which had come to stay. To this office streamed the unorganized of this district asking for organization — not only steel but all sorts of steel fabrication, as far removed from the glowing ingot as the saucepan, until the organizers exclaimed in despair, "We have to organize steel before we organize every plant manufacturing fishhooks."

Philip Murray, vice-president of the United Mine Workers of America, headed the Committee; Clinton Golden, late of the Labor Relations Board of Pittsburgh, was regional director. Lee Pressman was legal advisor. John Brophy, veteran labor leader, formed the liaison between C. I. O. and S. W. O. C. David McDonald was secretary-treasurer. A publicity department under Vincent Sweeney and a research department led by Harold Ruttenberg, completed the Pittsburgh setup.

For the sake of convenience, the steel area was divided into three districts — the northeastern, which takes in all of the Pittsburgh area including the Bethlehem Steel in Johnstown; the western and lake area, Chicago and Lake districts under Van A. Bittner; and the southern area commanded by John Mitch with headquarters in



Birmingham. The strong rank and file movement of N. R. A. days, even though then frustrated, had left something to build upon and furnished contact with men ready for a union. By far the greatest number of organizers was furnished by the United Mine Workers. These are seasoned, experienced men who have been through grueling campaigns.

Out in the field, in the Pittsburgh area, the S. W. O. C. office was usually found on the main streets. There were three hundred paid workers and an army of volunteers whose number was finally not less than five thousand. For if steel was to be organized, it would have to be a rank and file movement. As one of the leaders said, "We can give the steel workers the opportunity of organizing, but they will have to organize themselves."

It was an enormous job. The S. W. O. C. was confronting, not only steel, but all the open shop employers massed back of them. It was indeed as Philip Murray said, "The biggest task ever undertaken by organized labor within the memory of man. It is the most important job ever undertaken in the history of the labor movement in America. Only such a movement as this can break down the practices of intimidation, coercion — we are going to break them down and nothing under the canopy of these blue heavens will stop us, for this is our job."

Let us look at the difficulties confronting the S. W. O. C. We have glimpsed the cost of the open shop. Let us then look at steel, its cornerstone, in detail. Let us see how it fulfilled the responsibilities it assumed toward the workers when it decreed despotism and denied the workers all say as to the conditions under which they lived and worked. Let us see what these anti-union policies had done in terms of peoples' lives. Let us look at the steel towns and see how workers lived there. The pattern we see here we will find repeated by industry throughout the country.

It has been said of steel that no other power has as important a bearing on the general prosperity of America. What goes on in iron and steel affects us all. Every household, every person employs

steel in one manner or another, or uses in auto, railway, elevators, the products of steel.

The smelting of iron ore and the shaping of iron and steel employ over half a million men; another half million are employed in steel fabrication. U. S. Steel alone employs over 200,000 men — 60,000 more men than the United States Army in 1935. Five billion dollars are invested in the industry, or forty dollars for every person in the United States.

Of all industries, steel has been the most arrogant. Steel challenged the government of the United States when it avoided the Sherman Anti-Trust Laws, sidestepped the N. R. A., defied public opinion for years concerning the twelve-hour day, and only yielded to the pressure of social forces, which included the President of the United States, the clergy, and great civic organizations. When at last it partially replaced the gruelling seventy-two-hour week with three shifts of eight hours, it found that more steel was produced than ever before. Taken all together, steel's stupidity has matched its vast size.

The American Iron and Steel Institute, which represents 95 per cent of the total steel producing capacity of the country, dictates the policies and prices of the steel industry. Enormous salaries are paid to the heads of the great corporations, who maintain a virtual dictatorship in their steel empires. According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the salaries in 1935 for the heads of the steel companies were as follows:

Allegheny Steel Corporation . . . . .	\$111,704
Bethlehem Steel Corporation . . . . .	180,000
Crucible Steel Company . . . . .	171,000
Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation (1934) . . . . .	250,000
McKeesport Tin Plate Company . . . . .	225,417
National Steel Corporation . . . . .	160,000
United States Steel Corporation . . . . .	166,786
Republic Steel Corporation . . . . .	140,778

According to such observers as the accurate *Fortune* Magazine, the steel industry as a whole is "technologically one of the most

backward of our major industries." Until recently, it has followed a policy of no new inventions, no innovations. The industry in this country resisted the new alloys and new steel processes current in Europe as long as it could. U. S. Steel had delayed installing continuous strip-rolling machines until it was worsted by the independent companies.

Backward technologically, toward the direct steel consumer its price system is equally unsatisfactory, and is called by *Fortune Magazine*, "artificial, wasteful, discriminating and non-competitive." For ten years from 1922 to 1932, the price of steel rails, \$43 a ton, never varied. During the depression when wheat, cotton, and cattle had violent fluctuations of price, the price of rails and girders remained fixed. In 1935, when the government asked for bids on a large steel order, four bidding companies submitted the same figures.

The stockholder fared no better than consumer or worker in the great five-billion-dollar industry. U. S. Steel varied between 1926 to 1936 from a profit of \$21.19 per share to a loss of \$11.08 and paid no dividend on its common stock between 1932 and 1936.

The pamphlet *Steel and Men*, printed by the Council of Social Action of the Congregational Church states:

The present stockholders and the present employees must inevitably pay in low interest, poor equipment, and inadequate wages for the management's past stock watering. The steel industry is not serving the interest of those stockholders who want a fair and steady return on their investment.

Most of them have chosen steel, thinking that since it is our basic industry it would be a secure place in which to invest their money, and one which would yield fair and steady returns.

If steel was technologically backward, unsatisfactory to the consumer and stockholder alike, its employees fared worse. After the Homestead battle, labor was crushed whenever it tried to regain its losses. When U. S. Steel was formed in 1901, the movement of individual employers to bargain with labor in the industry was

checked by Carnegie's anti-labor policy, which was underwritten and reinforced by U. S. Steel. From 1892 to 1919 the record is one of lost strikes.

In 1919 came the great steel strike. Stickers appeared all over the steel towns which read, **STRIKE SEPTEMBER 22**. By the first of October, 365,000 men were out on strike. The strike which was under the leadership of William Z. Foster and John Fitzpatrick was 90 per cent effective through Gary and the Calumet district. Most of the Pittsburgh district was dark, and people saw the sky clearly for the first time in years, in Youngstown. But the odds against the steel workers were too great. The strike received but little support from the American Federation of Labor. The workers were beaten down by the forces of the deputies and of the state police. After a heroic struggle, the great steel strike was lost.

With the coming of the N. R. A., the workers' desire for organization flared up again. As in other industries the steel workers took Section 7A seriously and organized in great numbers. But the movement came to nothing. Mike Tighe of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Tin and Steel Workers did not support the strike movement and the workers again suffered disappointment.

So the workers continued to live under a virtual despotism, until the coming of the C. I. O. Their work was hard and uncertain, their hours were long. In 1929, 8 per cent of the workers were still working under the twelve-hour day and 28 per cent had ten-hour shifts. The average weekly pay in 1929 had arrived at the figure of \$32 but the common laborer was getting a cent less per hour than he had been in 1892. With the depression the pay came tumbling down until the average worker was making only \$13.20 a week, while the yearly wage was under \$600 for many workers.

Pay in steel lagged behind that of many other industries. In the summer of 1936, I heard frequent comments like that of a handsome Hungarian woman whose husband had just signed up with the union:

"The farmer came trying to sell me pig meat. Why, I told him my stomach wouldn't know what to do if I sat it down in front of a

piece of roast pork. It wouldn't know what it was. How can we buy meat, seven in the family, four big boys, eating like men but not old enough to work, and only father working? Payments on the house — we can't afford to buy meat."

It was not this quarrel with wages and hours alone, however, which caused the slow irresistible urge toward unionism. The workers had to vote as they were told; the rights guaranteed by the Constitution did not exist for them. Often their inadequate wages were paid in scrip and this they were forced to spend at the company store, which usually charged double the current prices. Their work was dangerous and uncertain. The system of straw bosses — there were 20,000 alone in U. S. Steel — led inevitably to favoritism and nepotism. The steel workers' revolt was also a mute protest against the steel towns themselves.

It has been said that civilizations write their own biography in terms of brick and stone, that they name their aspirations in their architecture and write their defeats and failures in terms of their slums. Bricks, stones, and mortar write a record which never lies.

One may find in the terms of handsome libraries, memorial buildings or parks, a species of apology for the general, uncivilized drabness of the older steel towns.

In 1919 I used to go visiting down near the tracks with Father Kazinski of Elm Street and the Willow Way, in Braddock. The Slovaks who then lived there have almost all moved out to make way for Negro workers, who in 1919 were brought in in great numbers to scab on the strikers.

Father Kazinski's parishioners have scattered to the new houses up above Braddock or Swissvale. The garbage-littered courts are unchanged. The two-room houses face between street and court with refuse and garbage heaped in the open spaces as it was in 1919.

When I revisited Braddock, in the summer of 1936, these houses down by the B. & O. tracks were more dilapidated and shabbier than they were sixteen years before. During the years of the depression no one paid rent and no repairs were made. Only one street



down there was still occupied by white people. All along one street were great tubs of oleanders — one of the few things that will grow under the steady rain of the slack which films with black every living thing. The alleys over in Homestead were worse. Here were mountains of ashes and refuse. Here before the ironic poster signed by the mayor that the “owner will be responsible for cleanliness” were piles of trash — so vast as to be almost historic. In these alleys, Negroes also had displaced the Slovaks who formerly lived here.

No water had been turned on in row after row of these houses since the depression in 1930. Water had to be carried in the buckets from the fire hydrant blocks away, after permits were obtained at Town Hall. The question of water is a tremendous one around the steel mills. The work of keeping clean is unending. Men come home with oil-soaked overalls into which has been ground the slack of the mills. To be without water is a deprivation anywhere, and here it is unbearable.

In Braddock there are no parks or playgrounds. The so-called playground is a bare, grassless, treeless field by the Pennsylvania tracks. The somber glory of the mills lines all the valleys which converge on Pittsburgh. At night their blasts of saffron or rose paint the heavens. During the day the smoke never ceases. There is a beauty and magnificence in the making of steel. The wants and needs of the little men who make the steel were lost before the exigencies of the giant industry.

Here in the steel towns, steel is great and man is small.

The combined injustices of years drove the steel workers to combat the fear that years of suppression had bred in them and there was a slow, steady move into the union. So the half million dollars spent in one advertisement against unionism by U. S. Steel at the beginning of the S. W. O. C. campaign, was, in the workers' minds, a fine argument for it. The innumerable spies and “stoolies” that surrounded the drive were another argument in favor of the union. After the coming of the S. W. O. C., spies increased. The rumors that mill police were augmented and that tear gas and ma-

chine guns filled the mills were later proved true. This surge toward unionism in those early days showed itself in the quiet power in all the meetings. The power came from the fact that every speaker and every organizer felt that millions of workers were vitally behind their movement.

Take the meeting in the bare, so-called Braddock Park near the railroad track. "Let us stand in silence in honor of our beloved pastor, Father Kazinski." The heads of a thousand men were bared. The women clustering on the railway bridge in bright-colored summer dresses bowed their heads. Children who had been playing on the outskirts of the crowd stood, heads bowed, boys with cap in hand. They stood there at the beginning of the steel drive for a full minute.

Father Kazinski reaffirmed the position he had taken in 1919. His fine white head was silhouetted against the blue of the sky. Courage, Faith, Unity were his theme.

"Be men," he told them. "Have courage. Join the union. Only through unity have you strength." You could see people straighten up. Men stood more proudly. As in 1919, he was with the workers. He was for organized labor, now as then. But now he could speak out in the open. You cannot today close the towns on the Monongahela against the people's constitutional rights of free assembly.

Take the meeting in Memorial Park of Tarentum, the first mass meeting there had been on the Allegheny River since the beginning of the campaign. It is a lovely little park, narrow, stretching along the wide river, the abrupt green hills mounting from the opposite shore. People came slowly, somewhat tentatively; now they began to wake up and become a real audience.

Smiley Shatoc was speaking. Haltingly, briefly, in broken English he was telling how the six hundred workers of the Hubbard Steel Company are organized 95 per cent. How they won their strike. Smiley Shatoc has dark red hair and fine strong features. He has a deep vitality and an easy strength.

There was a delegation of the victorious workers there. They stood forward, smiling. Suddenly in the applause, the audience was



fused together into something living. There was a fine quality about those Hubbard men as they stood there — not insolent but with the ease of security. They communicated this security to the hesitating, uncertain audience. This little strike of the Hubbard workers had a historic significance. It was the first victory of the steel workers, the beginning of the breakdown of the feudal system.

In this meeting at Tarentum, never for a moment could one forget the larger forces involved. The name of John L. Lewis rang through the meeting. They applauded when his name was mentioned. They did not forget there were a million and a quarter workers back of them.

This meeting by the river bank was fraught with significance. In 1934, the last time the urge for organization had pulsed through the steel mills, it was led by the rank and file committees. This time, instead of the bewildered leadership standing alone, isolated, repudiated by its own International, the might of the C. I. O. and the power of John L. Lewis were behind them.

At first organization had progressed in the Allegheny Valley as in the rest of the steel towns — quietly. There was house to house visiting; there were meetings in the woods; workers inside the mills who had signed up, contacted other workers. The quiet, steady drive went on throughout the mill towns. It was not spectacular but it went on perpetually. Only a comparatively few days separated secret meetings in the woods from the open meetings by the river.

Pat Fagan talked at Tarentum. He is organizer of United Mine Workers of America, District No. 5. If you can organize West Virginia, he told them, you can organize steel. Briefly he rehearsed the bloody story of West Virginia. To me, who know the early days of Mingo County and the shooting of Sid Hatfield, it seemed almost a miracle that West Virginia was organized.

"The banner of the United Mine Workers flies over every tippie in West Virginia," Pat Fagan said.

Something momentous had happened. The audience at Tarentum had assembled slowly by twos and threes. Fear and doubt accompanied them as they slowly drifted in. But soon there was no more

fear — doubt was gone. The confidence of the victorious strikers, the confidence of the speakers, entered into the audience. They were thinking together, they were feeling together, they laughed together, no longer little separate atoms overpowered by the might of the mills. They realized that they were powerful, too, powerful by their numbers, and that behind them was the powerful Committee for Industrial Organization.

It was a peculiarly significant meeting — there was no rant, there was courage, good sense, and there was idealism. It answered the slow urge toward organization which has long been stirring among the unorganized workers of America. Now it was alive again in this audience. The faces of four Negroes near me, so stolid when they came, so full of doubt, were filled with light. It was a fine-looking audience, strong, healthy and young, and self-respecting.

It seemed incredible that terror would be visited upon them for following their need to organize. But terror and intimidation were already abroad — up and down the Allegheny Valley, up and down the Monongahela, the Ohio, the Mahoning. Wherever steel mills were belching forth fire and smoke, workers were intimidated. There were threats of lockouts, threats of moving the plants.

In Aliquippa the situation got so tense that two State Troopers were called for, and no one could get them to say they were there to protect the workers. They said they were there to keep law and order. The workers knew that the troopers wouldn't be riding down the streets, their three-foot riot clubs raised high, driving the workers into their houses. In Braddock, they wouldn't break up funerals and ride into a crowd of parochial school children as they did in 1919.

But in spite of intimidation, organizing progressed. The first phase of establishing confidence, of education, passed. The time came for establishing lodges.

A brilliant piece of organizing was done by the S. W. O. C. in bringing over the members of the company union. In 1933, at the height of the organization under the N. R. A., Employee Repre-

sentative Plans became numerous throughout the steel towns; in other words, the employers set up company unions to combat Section 7A. These company unions were to prove a Frankenstein monster to the employers who created them. A great many of the workers joined these unions in good faith with an honest desire to work out a better relation between themselves and the employers. Many of the workers had not at first realized that these unions were fake unions through which nothing would ever be done for them, aside from adjusting minor grievances.

In a single mill the company was paying \$75,000 a year to support its creature — the Company Union. These things were told to the workers. Blocks of workers began coming over to the S. W. O. C. The way was led by the company union of Illinois Steel in South Chicago, where 3,000 workers came over together. Meantime throughout the steel towns company union representatives were joining the S. W. O. C. and holding cards in both organizations.

The efforts toward winning over the company union membership broadened, and C. I. O. Representative Councils were set up in scores of steel towns. On November 6, 1936, U. S. Steel Corporation proposed a 10 per cent increase based on a cost of living index and offering to sign such an agreement with the employee representatives; the power of the S. W. O. C. had become so great that the campaign against signing this agreement was entirely successful.

In November a meeting between the C. I. O. and the S. W. O. C. was held in Pittsburgh. They counted their gains and mapped plans for an intensive drive. At that time they announced that 82,000 workers had already been organized under the Steel Workers Organizing Committee.

The intensive drive bore fruit. The S. W. O. C. went into steel towns, such as Homestead, where frightened workers were reluctant to join the Union, and their sound trucks carried the message to workers fearful of *coming* to meetings. In Mr. Weir's company town of Weirton they had entered the political field and elected as sheriff one of the organizers beaten up by company thugs. The dam of fear

was broken. Then the re-election of President Roosevelt turned the tide for the S. W. O. C. The gains of the union became greater each week.

Meantime, in Washington, the La Follette Committee hammered away. The use of espionage, the employment of gunmen and thugs from so-called detective agencies as strikebreakers, and the purchase of quantities of tear gas and machine guns to be used on the workers, were exposed to an amazed public.

By the first of the year there were 100,000 in the union and 280 lodges. The first two phases had been accomplished, the time for contracts was nearing. The S. W. O. C., with the N. L. R. B. behind it, had become a force to be reckoned with.

History was on the side of the steel drive. It was part of the struggle which has fought reaction down the ages. The same spirit which has fought for religious liberty and political freedom is today fighting for industrial democracy. There is an awful power and might in steel, but there is an awful power and might in this age-old drive for freedom. It is like a force of nature irresistible as a tide; it recedes, but it does not die.

## V. Autos Organize

MEANTIME, while steel was organizing, so were autos. The great steel drive inspired the auto workers. The two great cornerstones of the C. I. O., automobiles and steel, were separate yet because the C. I. O. is so closely knit, the fates of the different unions are interwoven. Whether U. S. Steel would have settled without the victory over General Motors by the United Automobile Workers can never be ascertained.

In the past there were many attempts made at organization of the automobile industry. The A. F. of L. promised itself to do the job — but didn't do it. The story repeats itself so often it becomes monotonous. Independent unions sprang up. As with the other mass industries, the greatest increase in membership was under the N. R. A. Then the workers joined the union by thousands, but the A. F. of L. leadership was inadequate. Like other mass industries, the automotive industry was unadapted to craft unions.

Discouraged, the workers left the union, but not for long. Their need for organization was too great. The auto workers' discontent came in about equal parts from the speed-up and the absolute autocracy of the industry. The speed of the industry left them gutted at forty. The complicated pay system was unsatisfactory. Men had no say whatsoever as to how they should work; no way of airing their grievances. Men were fired for any union activity. How the community was poisoned by spies was shown by the General Motors' testimony before the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee. There was no job security. During any slack season there was an endless round of auto workers back on relief rolls. Favoritism was widespread as is always the case under despotism.

When the auto workers' union began its drive, wages in some places were as low as twenty cents an hour. Many auto workers were working sixty to seventy hours a week under an unbearable speed-up. Lead poisoning and silicosis were frequent; conditions were such that every foundry in Detroit was a menace to the workers' health.

The auto workers' union was faced by three great autocratic powers: General Motors, the Chrysler Corporation, and Ford, who among them make 90 per cent of the automobiles of this country. The advance of the great auto industry has been one of the great technical achievements of the century. The gains have been fabulous. Ford, beginning with a capital of only \$28,000 and some credit, made \$280,000 his first year. This tenfold gain was the seed of the billion dollar Ford empire. The other great automobile powers' profits equal Ford's. General Motors net sales in the twenty-six years between 1909 to 1937 were more than sixteen billions of dollars.

America makes 80 per cent of the automobiles of the world, and three-quarters of the automobiles of this country are made in Michigan. In a quarter of a century the small towns of Flint, Hamtramck, Highland Park, and Pontiac have grown to be great cities of a hundred thousand, and they have kept all the characteristics of the small towns.

With unbelievable profits in the auto industry, the salaries of the officials have been enormous. Knudsen and Sloan of General Motors approached half a million a year each in 1936, and while the wages were more than moderate, each wage increase has been obtained with difficulty. The labor cost is one of the lowest, being only 9.8 per cent of product value as against a little over 20 per cent average for the principal mass industries.

How this young union whirled its membership from 30,000 to 400,000 in a year is one of labor's greatest epics. When Homer Martin was elected president of the United Auto Workers at the 1936 convention at South Bend, Indiana, there were only 30,000 auto workers and only \$30,000 in the union treasury. There were



sixteen contracts and ten of these were in one local in Toledo. This small membership, moreover, was not in the big automobile centers. It was scattered through the minor plants in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio. Detroit and the great automobile cities had not been touched by organization. There was not a contract with any of the great manufacturers. There were, moreover, nine or ten independent unions in the field.

When Homer Martin reported before the Atlantic City Conference of the C. I. O. in October, 1937, the Auto Workers Union had upward of 400,000 members, and written agreements with 4,000 automobile and auto parts concerns, which included every great manufacturer with the exception of Henry Ford. Their agreements included seniority rights, grievance committees, the acknowledgment of the shop steward system. The wages of the industry had been increased \$300,000,000. In some places, wages had been increased from thirty and forty cents to one dollar an hour. Much had been done to set up healthier working conditions in the industry.

From the time that the auto workers consolidated the different independent unions within their ranks and joined the C. I. O., a steady organizational campaign was carried on. In Flint it was under the direction of Wyndham Mortimer and Walter Reuther. In the Dodge factory, Richard Frankenstein, now head of the Ford drive and vice-president of the union, was in charge. These campaigns and others throughout the industry were carried on, at first quietly, and in some cases almost underground.

The early victories of 1936 contributed to the success of the General Motors and Chrysler campaigns. The Bendix plant of South Bend, Indiana, had the first stay-in strike in autos, the first victory for the auto workers, and signed the first agreement.

A most important strike was that of Midland Steel in Detroit, which followed shortly on the Bendix victory. The strike of Midland Steel was in the heart of Detroit, then an open shop town. The workers presented such a picture of unity and solidarity that their courage was an example to the other unorganized workers in the industry.



The Kelsey Hays Wheel Corporation strike was of historic significance because it was the first to affect the Ford Motor Company. Bribes were offered to the workers in vain and threats were without effect. This strike was won and gained a seventy-five cent minimum hourly wage. Midland Steel gained union recognition, a forty-five hour week, time and a half for overtime, 10 per cent increase in piece rates and a minimum of  $58\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  for women and  $62\text{¢}$  for men.

Another instance of how interrelated the C. I. O. unions are is the fact that contributing to the victory over the great automobile manufacturers was the strike of the flat glass workers. There had been a series of strikes throughout 1936 in the flat glass industry. In October, 1936, glass workers struck in plants in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The strike dragged on till glass was becoming scarce in the automobile industry.

In December the Libbey-Owens Ford plant sat down to protest the acceptance of a Chrysler order transferred to other regions. The strike was settled in time to be helpful to the General Motors campaign, since Chrysler was able to get glass and continue to manufacture.

### GENERAL MOTORS STRIKE

These early victories caused a stir through the whole industry and the discontent of the General Motors employees came to a head. On January first, just as Governor Frank Murphy was taking office, Fisher No. 2 sat down. By night Fisher No. 1 had followed. This strike soon spread so that its span was from Oakland on the Pacific Coast through eight states to Atlanta, Georgia. The young Auto Workers Union challenged the power of General Motors. It was the first nationwide strike of the Committee for Industrial Organization, whose flexibility and inventiveness were so significantly shown in rubber and in the Camden R. C. A. strike. At its peak 125,000 men were involved in Detroit, Pontiac, Flint, Lansing, Saginaw, Bay City, Norwood, Cleveland, Toledo, Kansas City, Anderson, Janesville, Oakland, and Atlanta.

The ball for the General Motors strike was set rolling by Atlanta, which went on strike November 18. Cause: the usual one, men fired for wearing union buttons.

The firing of a union member led to a strike in Kansas City the middle of December. There was a conference in December between Homer Martin and John L. Lewis in Washington, and on December 24, 1936, Homer Martin wrote to Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., then president of the General Motors Corporation and to William S. Knudsen, now president, then executive vice-president. He asked for a conference to discuss the long list of grievances which had grown out of management policies.

The only answer to this letter, however, was the ironic proposal that grievances be taken up with individual plant managers, who have no power to settle anything.

Strike was in the air. In Cleveland the key Fisher Body plant sat down. In Flint the historic sit-down quickly followed when the Company began to move dies out of the Fisher Body No. 1 to Grand Rapids and Pontiac. The strike went into a national phase.

The company immediately swung into action by clapping an injunction on the sit-down strikers. The first injunction was voided because the judge was found to possess a large block of General Motors stock, and was, therefore, an interested party.

That was the first gun. The second gun was the formation of the Flint Alliance. Its rather comic figurehead was George Boyeson, former mayor and Buick paymaster. It pretended to function as an organization having nothing to do with General Motors, but its camouflage was too apparent to deceive anyone who did not wish to be deceived. Foremen, supervisors, and company union representatives acted as agents for Boyeson in circulating "back-to-work" petitions and Flint Alliance cards in the plants; cards which were later turned over to Governor Murphy by Boyeson himself.

No vagrant ever had vaguer means of support than this Alliance. There were no dues. Yet Floyd Williamson, a high-priced member of the Lawrence Witt Advertising Agency, came from New York to handle the organization's public relations. General Motors press

agents were constantly seen in conference with Boyeson, at the Hotel Durant in Flint.

Included among these were two men regularly employed by a New York public relations firm and active in the Alliance's publicity. Part of this publicity was the notorious I. M. A. News, which pretended to represent the Flint workers.

But the Flint Alliance did plenty of harm during its poisoned little life span. Hundreds of well-meaning citizens joined, convinced they were serving the town's best interests.

Its objectives were threefold: to create discontent among the workers with its back-to-work movement; to build up General Motors to the Flint public, at the same time discrediting the union and its leaders; and to alarm workers and townspeople so that vigilantes could be organized.

And it was very nearly successful. It succeeded in dividing and confusing the workers and almost drenched the city in blood. While this was going on, the strike organization had taken firm hold both in the plants and outside. Here is an account of what Fisher Body looked like inside.

### A NIGHT IN FISHER NO. 1

The L-shaped plant of Fisher No. 1 is a block long and half a block wide. The L was brilliantly lit up on its first and third floor. About a third of the way down the building was a picket shack and directly behind it was the entrance, through a window, since entrance through the gate itself could not be so readily guarded.

We climbed a short ladder to a platform supported on four ashcans. Here a picket demanded our credentials and said "O.K." We crawled through the window to a similarly supported platform and were met by a second picket who looked us over suspiciously. Again we produced our credentials. He frisked us efficiently for any liquor and then nodded. At the foot of a flight of steps a third picket looked over our papers and returned them to us without saying a word. His eyes were blue and sharp and stern. It was

discomforting, very, but no different from the procedure of entering an armed camp in a war zone. This was a war zone.

In front of us was the now silent Belt — a mute and still line of incomplete car bodies stretching away from right to left. Progressively each body showed advancement; changes that were barely perceptible near at hand but startling as one turned and looked down the line.

To our right was a small booth topped by a radio loudspeaker and occupied by two men. A small ever-changing group of men circled in front of it. Scattered around were other men reading, talking, listening to a muted radio. Many were bearded. They wouldn't shave until victory came. We stepped over the track and chain which carried and moved the belt. We found another belt leading from left to right.

Here the bodies were comparatively sophisticated. Each no longer seemed just like the next, for now each was of a different color. Car doors had appeared. A door handle suddenly sprouted as one gazed down the line.

Suspended from the ceiling and shortly beyond was the conveyor of a third belt, parallel to that of the bodies. From this depended long iron rods whose lower ends bristled with hooks. On these hooks were hung the padding and the seats for the bodies.

We followed the stationary belt in the direction in which it would have moved. On the back of one body was a large chalked sign, "Hotel Astor." Here the large back seat had disappeared from its place on the hooks. Inside the car, and in nearly all thereafter, was to be found a sleeping picket. Further down was a "Mills Hotel." Many were simply marked with the name of the occupant.

The belt took a broad turn down the L. The L was dimly lighted and the bodies shortly merged into one another in the murk. Overhead was a sign, "QUIET ZONE." On the oblong piles of padding, sleeping men could be seen dimly. We changed our course to a nearby lighted doorway. A picket on guard asked no questions — we had passed the entrance test. We climbed to the darkened

second floor. Here again was another unquestioning picket. A short inspection showed that this was the stock room floor. Piles of seats, parts of seats. I never knew so much wood went into the making of a body.

We glanced down the L. Here was a belt but there was absolutely no change discernible from one body to the next. We started to climb to the third floor.

"You can't go there," the picket said pleasantly. Our eyes questioned. "You can't go there," he repeated.

A voice from above called, "Hey, I want relief."

"Who?"

"Fred Taylor. I want relief from the roof."

"Aw, freeze some more, can't yuh?" Then to the picket below, "Relief for the roof." The picket below bawled, "Relief for the roof."

We passed a sleepy-eyed picket coming up on our way down.

\* \* \*

The basement, extending the length of the building, was a huge recreation room and cafeteria. We were led past four ping-pong tables (none of which was unused during our stay), to a small room, filled with men and smoke, in which an orchestra was playing.

The orchestra finished its tune. The crowd of men looked curiously at us as the other men asked a few questions. We were introduced. There were smiles and applause. "Now let's give 'em a serenade."

The orchestra of six was seated on three tables placed in a hollow rectangle. It was composed of three guitars, one harmonica, one banjo and one violin. They played "She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountin." The performance wasn't perfect but it was gay and so willing. Some of the songs they sang with the usual words but many were parodies of timely subjects.

During the singing of the parody, "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," one realized over again that these men were all Americans of the old tradition, that they were fighting for their rights, free-



dom, the ability to live their own lives, to have something to say about their living conditions as they knew they should instead of being dictated to by a power which refuses to grant any opportunity for hearing the grievances of these men.

### PENGALLY HALL

Fisher No. 1, No. 2, and Chevy No. 4 were the front line of the strike war in Flint. Pengally Hall was the heart and brains of the battle. Except for the stream of workingmen and their wives, pouring in and out of its dingy doorway twenty-four hours a day, it was not remarkable.

Twenty-four hours a day. Activity in Pengally never stopped. Each moment saw a steady flow of people climbing and descending the narrow wooden stairways. Two union guards served the double purpose of checking those going in and out at the bottleneck of the first and second flight. At the top of the second flight two more guards examined the union cards and passed upon everyone entering the hall. Finks had to be smart to get by these watchmen.

On the way up to the main floor you passed the room of the Women's Auxiliary, which maintained a first-aid station with a nurse, and where workers went to get transportation. As you reached the top of the stairs the first thing you saw in the center of the hallway was a table where two men were enrolling union members. There was a never-ending line of people applying for membership.

Next were the two rooms of the officers. Here people came to pay dues and make inquiries of all kinds. Behind closed doors the union leaders and Strike Committee held their committee meetings protected from the eyes of spies. It was in this room that labor history was made. Here the strategy was worked out for the sit-down in Chevy No. 4, which won the General Motors strikes. Here came delegates from the sit-downers to tell of their decision to resist the injunction. Here John Brophy consulted with the local leaders and contributed his mature experience to the strike. The committees

here were in constant communication with the strategy board of Detroit and relayed to Homer Martin and the board the pulse-beat of the strike.

The room next to this was the meeting place for out-of-town sympathizers. Flying squadrons from Detroit and other cities got information on transportation or where they should sleep, etc. Opposite and leading into the big hallway was a large committee room, always in use.

Following the rooms around the hallway, the strike organization became apparent. The first room was the picket captains' room, and here too were the men who formed the Protection Squads. The Protection Squads surrounded the leaders in the sound car to ward off attacks. Thugs had wrecked some cars in Detroit and other places.

Next in order was the publicity room. Here was the "Baby Brain-trust" — the boys and girls from Ann Arbor who got out the punch press, the mimeographed strikers' bulletin, which supplemented the strike news between the issues of the *Flint Auto Worker*. Carl Hessler, in charge of publicity, issued statements to the press, held conferences with newspaper men, and helped to edit the *Auto Worker*.

The reading room was next, full of men reading; here strikers went for meal tickets; anyone engaged in strike duty rated a meal at the Strike Kitchen on Saginaw Avenue. Here tickets were given out for gas and oil for the well-organized Transport Corps, for strikers had dozens of cars for the use of the strike, cars donated and chauffeured by strikers and strike sympathizers.

Down the hall was the room where welfare was taken care of. People needing strike relief or applying for city or state relief, went there. And still further down the hall was the kitchen.

Then came the hall proper, resembling thousands of union halls, with its dirty windows, missing panes of glass, its old piano and loudspeaker.

During the strike, this hall was never empty. At six in the morning, folding-chairs were set up facing the platform. Soon after, some



strike committee occupied a corner and the day began. Another committee took up another corner. Strikers drifted into the hall with sandwiches and coffee from the strike kitchen which served breakfast until noon. Strike problems were discussed perpetually. The problems were never questions of winning or losing. They were how to win. Victory was always certain.

About two o'clock strikers from one of the plants filled the hall. The bulletin board told which factory unit was in session. At these meetings the suggestions of the various strike committees were brought before the rank and file for discussion and confirmation. At these meetings the strike strategy was freely considered. Thus each striker not only knew the duties of his post but he had a hand in deciding the scope of his duties.

The hall emptied at four, but not for long. Members of the Women's Emergency Brigade then went into executive session in the southeast corner.

Long before the Emergency Brigade had adjourned, the first people for the big evening rally began to arrive. The hall filled rapidly. By seven, there was hardly standing room.

All of striking Flint was there: the strikers, their wives, fathers, daughters. Eyes turned to the green and white berets of Emergency Brigade women from Detroit and Toledo and they were given a cheer. Cheers greeted the names of Homer Martin and John L. Lewis. By ten-thirty the speaking was over.

Young hands folded and stacked the chairs. Pengally Hall became a self-service night club. Dancing, entertainment, singing never stopped. In the first light of morning, the broom brigade arrived to sweep away the day's collection of dust and cigarette butts, the dancers stepping in and out among the dirt piles.

#### BATTLE OF BULLS RUN

The first-aid station of the Women's Auxiliary was needed. In the early stages of the strike, the workers were attacked by the police in front of Fisher No. 2. This raid was deliberately planned for the purpose of crushing the strike. A battle ensued which was

called later *The Battle of Bulls Run*. It was called this because the bulls ran.

The police, armed with tear gas, with clubs and guns, were defeated by men and women armed with nothing except the things that came to hand which they could grab up. Fourteen fell from gunshot wounds.

But the result was victory.

After four hours' fighting, the police were through — the bulls ran — leaving a total of fourteen wounded, one man almost killed, and numerous tear gas victims, including many women.

Preparatory to the battle the streets had been cleared. Motorists had been warned to drive elsewhere. The police stationed themselves around the plant armed with tear gas and guns. They had their gas masks on when the women came with the evening meal. The door through which they usually passed the food was blocked. The women began passing the food through the windows. The company guards gave the signal to the police. Then came the tear gas. One shell was shot inside the plant, one into the crowd. But the men and women with streaming eyes persisted in getting the food in. They fought back. Telling about it later, the women said,

"Nothing was going to stop us getting food in to our men." The first shot crashed through the air. Surprised for a moment by tear gas and shots, the workers soon rallied and determined to fight.

Inside the plant the heavy fire hoses were played on the police and on the tear gas bombs.

More tear gas, and another blast of gunfire. The police were firing pointblank into the crowd that included women. Union sympathizers were retaliating with the only means of defense they had — stones, lumps of coal, steel hinges, milk bottles. That, and their courage, were their only weapons. Yet they held their ground.

The sound truck came into play. Its calm great voice directed the battle; advised the men where the attacks would come from, encouraged them, told them to stand firm.

After two hours of battle the police began to weaken. They stopped shooting into the crowd, but for another hour they contin-

ued their gas attacks. A barricade of cars was formed. The sound cars continued to direct the fighting men and women. Guards were thrown about Union Hall in Pengally Building, and no one without credentials was admitted. The wounded had been removed. The police finally withdrew.

The strikers picketed all night behind a barricade of motorcars. A roaring fire blazed, around which marched the strikers. Two new elements had been added to aid in the struggle for victory. One was the use of the sound truck, and the other was participation of the women. They had seen their men shot at, the police had tried to keep them from feeding their men, and they had fought in spite of tear gas, in spite of gunfire.

The scarred walls of Fisher Body No. 2 bore testimony to the heaviness of this gunfire long after the Battle of Bulls Run.

By morning the state police had been called in, and the militia were being mustered in the armory, but the workers of Flint had won an outstanding victory.

Peace moves were now begun. Governor Murphy had finally persuaded General Motors to confer with the union. For it cannot be repeated too often, that this strike occurred only because the General Motors Corporation refused to meet with union representatives, and for this reason 125,000 men were out of work.

Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., and Knudsen held a meeting with John L. Lewis and other union officials which lasted exactly twelve minutes. The Flint Alliance had requested General Motors to recognize it and confer with it also. General Motors had consented. The strike negotiations were ended, but not before the sit-down strikers of Guide-Lamp in Anderson had marched out of the factory, a band leading them. But Fisher No. 1 and No. 2 still sat.

## VI. Sit-Down In Chevy 4

THE STRIKE seemed at a deadlock. Injunction proceedings were under way. The management had even refused to meet with the Secretary of Labor.

The strike had leaped out of the frame of unionism and it had become a contest between "economic royalists," like the Du Ponts, Morgans, and Sloans, and a President and Governor favorable to organized labor. Here was a strike whose outcome might influence the labor movement for many years. Its success or its failure did not concern automobiles alone. It took in its sweep steel, coal, rubber, electrical workers. The fate of the whole labor movement was closely bound together with its victory.

Anyone experienced in strike atmosphere could have told that the mass meeting in Flint, Sunday night, January 30, 1937, which was addressed by Father J. W. R. Maguire and Mrs. Gifford Pinchot was no ordinary meeting. It was the molten core of this historic automobile strike. It was almost impossible to get through the good-natured crowd. Every seat was taken. Workers were packed close against the wall. They thronged the stairways. It was an assembly of men who were on the march to victory. Failing immediate settlement, action of some sort was inevitable. All that week the Chevrolet workers had been holding meetings about the discharge of workers over union activities.

The workers had become increasingly restless since General Motors had used the mob against them. On Monday, January 25, 1937, a mob attacked a Union meeting at Anderson, Indiana, wrecked the headquarters and beat up organizers.

On Tuesday, January 26, the Flint Alliance, which had seemed to

die a dishonored death, only to spring to life as a vigilante group, held a meeting and sent a delegation to Governor Murphy with a strikebreaking proposition. And on the same day, Mr. Alfred Sloan, then president of General Motors, refused Secretary of Labor Perkins' invitation to meet with union representatives in Washington to discuss settlement. On Wednesday the 27th, a mob assaulted four union workers in a Bay City Hotel and later that night sideswiped the workers' car with professional expertness, sending four men to the hospital, one of whom almost died. On Thursday the 28th, union workers were mobbed at the train in Anderson. There was obviously a common denominator between these acts of violence in widely different parts of the country which accounted for citizens in Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, and Anderson demonstrating against the union.

The common denominator was General Motors which tried to crush the Union by terror and mob violence, to discredit it through the action of the Citizens Committee, and to make the workers feel that the management would never negotiate.

A meeting of protest against the Bay City mobbing scheduled for Sunday in Saginaw was called off at the Governor's request. These various things stirred up the workers as did the fact that General Motors, anticipating a strike in Chevrolet, had tried to force a premature strike which would be lost and which would discourage organization in Chevrolet for some time to come.

When Chevrolet opened after a two weeks' shutdown, the management began an intensive campaign of intimidation and firing. Several hundred armed guards were on duty. Union men were threatened and manhandled.

When the union tried to meet with plant manager Arnold Lenz to discuss the situation, he put the meeting off from day to day.

During the General Motors strike there was a peculiarly sensitive adjustment between the local leaders and the rank and file, and again, between local leadership and the strike strategy board in Detroit. This responsiveness between the leadership and the workers was one of the important reasons for the strike's success. It is

disastrous for a leadership to force action on a group of workers for which they are not ready. It is still more disastrous to have a rank and file demand for action denied them by the leaders. This had happened in Flint in 1934 when the workers had been eager to strike. When the strike move was blocked, the union membership lost interest and faded away.

Now action had become imperative.

Something had to happen.

Action came. Chevrolet 4 sat down.

The victorious sit-down was the result of a brilliant piece of strategy. The union let it be known at a meeting where stool pigeons were present that a strike would begin in Chevrolet 9 — and carefully guarded the secret that their real objective was Chevrolet 4.

The Chevrolet plant covers eight acres and has nine divisions and a powerhouse. Plant No. 4 is the key plant which makes the motors. Without Plant No. 4, Chevrolet cannot make cars. This plant is set in a hollow. A little hill about five hundred feet long leads to it.

It was around Chevy 4 that the company guards had been stationed but now they were all concentrated in Plant No. 9, with tear gas and clubs, and all fighting occurred within the plant. There was no disorder anywhere else.

Every step was timed. The sound car appeared in front of No. 9. Word was sent to the meeting going on in Pengally Hall. The workers hurried to picket Chevrolet 9 headed by the Women's Emergency Brigade with their red caps.

Behind the windows were dimly seen figures fighting. There was something terrifying in that shadowy battle.

The women went up and started breaking windows. Someone called out: "We mustn't break windows, we mustn't destroy anything." Others answered, "We've got to let air in — they've gassed our boys inside." Nobody wanted to break windows, but it was necessary.

Word came from the sound car calling to the men to stand fast.



Finally the sound car recalled the women, and sent them to rest at headquarters. They left reluctantly. Not even they knew that at this very moment, the real sit-down was taking place in Chevrolet 4, blocks away.

At headquarters casualties were coming in. The Women's Auxiliary room was crowded with men getting minor injuries dressed. There were eighteen casualties in all. Two of them had to be taken to the hospital. The room was soon full of bleeding men, the table heaped high with crimson gauze. None of the casualties happened outside the plant.

One of the men was badly cut about the face. They bandaged his head until he looked as though he were gazing out of a nun's head-dress. As he was being bandaged, he told his story:

"One hundred of us started walking to Plant No. 9. When the company guards sprang out at us the first thing I knew I saw a big company policeman about to crack down on a fellow near me. I grabbed for his club. He was so big he swung me around and I got the club on the tip of my chin. That is how I got my chin cut.

"Next I was knocked down by a policeman, and that's how I got my head cut. I was bleeding all over. A couple of the company cops were standing over me when I opened my eyes — as much as I could, for blood — and said: 'You want some more — you S. O. B.?' Boy, they were tough. But we were stronger than they were. Men were fighting everywhere. They let off the tear gas, but we fought our way out."

Another story of a wounded man went this way: "The company police and thugs sprang up from nowhere. They kept them shut up in the employment office and sprung them loose on us.

"In a moment there was fighting everywhere. They were rolling around on the floor. They had clubs and we were unarmed. They started shooting off tear gas. I saw one fellow hit on the head and when he swung backwards he cut his head on the machinery. He started to stagger out. Two of the thugs knocked him down again. I let go on a couple of thugs. You kind of go crazy when you see thugs beating up men you know."



The women had come back from No. 9 where they had let air in to the gassed men. One of the women was standing wiping her eyes which were smarting with tear gas. Around her clung the acid smell of gas. Around the room were red-capped members of the Emergency Brigade, that was formed after the Battle of Bulls Run.

There was a group of them which slept every night in the union restaurant, in case of trouble. There was a large committee which spent the night on the picket lines. They were fearless and seemingly tireless. One and all were normal, sensible women who were doing this because they had come to the mature conclusion that it must be done if they and their children were to have a decent life. Inevitably they were behind their husbands as long as there was need, and they showed the same matter of course capability with which they got the children off to school. Today their job was "protecting their men."

I went down to the Chevrolet plant with two members of the Emergency Brigade. The workers had now captured plant No. 4. The street was full of people — there were about twenty policemen between the bridge and the high gate of the plant. They were quiet and unprovocative, so the crowd of pickets was good-natured. The sound car was directing operations.

The use of the sound truck is new in strike procedure and it is hard to know how a strike was ever conducted without it. As we came down past the policemen a great voice, calm and benign, proclaimed that everything was in hand — the plant was under control.

Next the great disembodied voice, really the voice of auburn-haired young Roy Reuther, urged the men in the plant to barricade themselves from tear gas. Every now and then the voice boomed:

"Protection squad. Attention! Guard your sound car. Protection squad. Attention!"

Then the voice addressed the workers who crowded the windows of the lower levels. At the top of the steep flight of steps were the workers of the plant, lunch buckets under their arms, waving at the pickets in the street. A crowd of workers fringed the roof. The

sound car inquired if they were union men. They shouted, "Yes." The crowd cheered.

The measured soothing voice of the sound car boomed:

"Word has come to us that there are men in the crowd anxious to join the union. Go to the last car, you will find the cards ready to sign. If you have no money for dues with you you can come to Pengally Hall later." The sound car struck up *Solidarity* and the men at the top of the steps, on top of the plant, in the street, all sang.

A woman's voice next — Genora Johnson. She told the crowd that the women had gone to the Hall to wipe their eyes clear of tear gas and would soon be back. "We don't want any violence; we don't want any trouble. We are going to do everything we can to keep from trouble, but we are going to protect our husbands."

Down the hill presently came a procession, preceded by an American flag. The women's bright red caps showed dramatically in the dark crowd. They were singing, *Hold the Fort*.

To all the crowd there was something moving about seeing the women return to the picket line after having been gassed in front of plant No. 9. A cheer went up; the crowd took up the song. The line of bright-capped women spread itself out in front of the high gate. Clapping hands, they struck up the song, *We Shall Not Be Moved*. Some of the men who had jumped over the gate went back, amid the cheers of the crowd.

I went to the top of the little hill and a file of men were coming out of the back of the building.

"Are you going home?"

"Home — Hell no! We're going back to picket the plant. Half of us are sitting down inside, and half of us are coming out to picket from the street."

"How many of you are for the sit-down?"

"Ninety per cent," a group of them chorused.

It was getting dark, the crowd had grown denser. A black fringe of pickets and spectators was silhouetted against the brilliant green lights of the plant windows.

"Protection squad. Guard your sound car," came the voice.

I went with members of the Women's Auxiliary to Fisher No. 2 to get "salamanders," which are corrugated iron cans in which fires can be built, and to arrange for material for a shack for the night picket line. The women were going to stay all night.

Red Mundell, chairman of the strike committee, met us at the gate. While they were getting buckets to improvise a salamander they asked us to have supper — bean soup, bologna sandwiches, rice pudding, and coffee. It was very cold and the warmth and companionship of the plant were welcome. It was like stepping into a serene world to come in from the excitement of the picket line. Men were eating supper, reading papers, listening to the radio as if a sit-down strike were a normal way of life.

There was plenty of excitement in union headquarters a mile and a half away, where a meeting was being held. You could hear the cheers as you pushed up the crowded stairway. Presently some of the Women's Emergency Brigade came in to warm up.

"The National Guard has been called out," they reported. "We met them going down as we came back."

"What they need the National Guard for, I don't know," one of them said. "Everything's quiet down there. The picket line is marching around the salamanders singing. They are all as quiet and contented as kittens."

This crowd in front of Chevrolet No. 4 was not as terrifying as many a Christmas crowd. There was no disturbance in the streets for all the fighting was inside the plant. Yet the Mayor and Chief of Police phoned the Governor for troops to keep order. The police did not make a gesture of dispersing the crowd. They stood on the bridge and did not interfere. There had not even been a massing of great crowds. The demonstration in front of Chevrolet No. 4, the picketing of the plant, were peaceful and orderly.

Nevertheless when later in the evening I went down to Chevrolet No. 4, a cordon of militia men had been thrown around the great plant. We could not pass. Far down in the hollow the salamanders glowed. You could see the faithful picket line moving back and

forth. At half past three in the morning a dozen women of the Emergency Brigade were on duty in the first-aid room in Pengally Hall.

Fisher No. 2 came within the barricaded area. People living within the area had to get military passes to go to and from their homes. Children living just outside the area had to go miles around to get to school.

When the Women's Auxiliary went down with food for the strikers they were not allowed "to get food in to their boys." The sound car was also taken by the military. The management turned off the heat in the plant.

Homer Martin and John Brophy communicated with the Governor. The Governor stated that his reason for not allowing the food past the barricades was that he had been informed that there were hundreds of people in Chevy No. 4 who came from the outside and who were not bona fide strikers.

"Even if this were so," John Brophy argued, "there is no need for this brutality of starving and freezing strikers through the use of troops."

He strongly urged that he should be allowed to go through the plant and investigate who was there. Late on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 2, he was given a military pass and allowed to make an inspection of the plant.

There were no outsiders there. By that time the workers had been nearly twenty-four hours without food. There was a commissary with chocolate bars, nuts, and other things which they had left untouched — it belonged to the management.

The result of the investigation was communicated to the Governor. By his order food was again allowed the strikers. Triumphant the Women's Auxiliary wagons loaded with food went past the military.

They had got food in to their men, again.

How strongly these women came to feel their part in the economic fight that lay behind the sit-downs is well expressed in this letter from a striker's wife:

## MRS. VIOLET BAGGETT'S LETTER

*A month ago today I knew nothing and cared less about the Automobile Union. My husband being a member of the United Auto Workers, attended meetings, but just before this sit-down strike at Cadillac it seemed to me that about all he thought about was going to union meetings. I'd heard about the Reds and had been told that this gang were Reds with leaders in Russia. I'd also been informed they met in beer gardens with plenty of short-haired girls to entertain them.*

*So when the strike was called and my husband stayed in all day and then came home, only to start out next morning for the picket line, I decided it was time I stopped this union business for good, in our home anyway. So I started out as soon as I knew he was well on his way. It didn't take long to find the place but on the door was a card saying Use Side Door Please. Sure enough the side door opened into a beer garden. By that time I was mad all over.*

*The man in charge seemed surprised when I demanded the Cadillac strikers and told me they were upstairs. By then I wasn't only mad but tired as well, and climbing those stairs didn't improve my disposition — not much. I met a lady coming down from the kitchen and before I could make up my mind just what to say first she smiled and asked me if I'd come to help. Instead of flappers and empty beer bottles I saw half a dozen women peeling vegetables, others washing dishes.*

*I thought I'd stick around a little before starting my little riot. I peeled onions while my eyes wept tears of agony, then potatoes, then we cut bread till my hands blistered, sorted and cut and packed pies, hundreds of them. By night I was almost too tired to go home and I'd completely forgotten to speak my piece. The other women didn't seem to mind the long hours. I kept this up for seven whole days, sometimes from seven to seven. I soon learned everyone was too busy to bother about how I felt, so I got busy, too.*

*I found a common understanding and unselfishness I'd never known. These people are real people and I'm glad I'm one of them. I only wish I'd got mad long ago and investigated, but I didn't have time for anything outside of my own small circle. I'm living for the first time with*

*a definite goal. I want a decent living for not only my family but for everyone. Just being a woman isn't enough any more. I want to be a human being. I'm ready and glad to wear my green beret and Women's Emergency Brigade armband anytime, anywhere I'm needed. I hope if anyone chances to read this they'll take the time to find out as I did what women can and are doing to help men in their fight for decent wages and working conditions.*

*Mrs. Violet Baggett, President  
West Side Local Women's Auxiliary, Detroit\**

\* Reprinted from *The United Auto Worker* of February 25, 1937



## VII. Victory in Flint

THE SIT-IN in Chevrolet 4 was successful. It ended the deadlock. Governor Murphy communicated with President Roosevelt. The President himself exerted pressure. Within twenty-four hours Alfred Sloan and a representative of General Motors were negotiating with John L. Lewis and the auto unions, with Governor Murphy as their go-between.

But in spite of the negotiations the injunction proceedings were continued. Governor Murphy has stated that he considers this an act which complicated the negotiations, heightened the tenseness in Flint, and almost precipitated a massacre. He stated that from the moment negotiations began, the injunction proceedings should have been dropped.

Looking back it seems a miracle that bloodshed was averted. All credit belongs to Governor Murphy that it was. Every sort of pressure was put upon him to use violence on the sit-down strikers. He persisted in his view that the strike could be settled by reason. Political honors were offered him, if he would use the troops to clear the strikers from the factories. When he would not, he was reviled, slandered, and his life was threatened.

Flint looked like an armed camp. More than four thousand National Guards were there, including cavalry and a machine gun corps. A night visit to the big Chevrolet plant and Fisher Body No. 2 reminded one of an American sector in wartime France. A military pass was required to go through the lines, the visitor was challenged every few feet. The soldiers were huddled in the snow around a fire in front of Chevrolet No. 4; on the other side of the six-foot fence, topped with barbed wire, were the union pickets.

"You boys got plenty of wood for your fire?" a striker called. "Just sing out if you need more and we'll pass some through."

"Thanks, Buddy, we're expecting more soon."

No hard feelings between the boys in overalls and the boys in uniform. A number of the rank and file of the guardsmen had been automobile workers themselves at one time or another. They muttered among themselves that they were not going to do any dirty work should they be ordered to clear the factories of the sit-down strikers.

On both sides of the dark street which was punctuated with red fires, windows of idle factories shone with green lights. In Fisher Body No. 2 the strikers were singing *Hold The Fort*. It was after midnight. Both sides were still alert.

The tenseness in Flint grew. No one knew what action would be taken against the strikers, no one knew whether they would be evicted with violence. The strikers in both plants decided to stay in even in the face of death. On February 3, they sent moving telegrams to Governor Murphy. From Fisher No. 1,

The stay-in strikers of this plant now appeal to you on the basis of public statements that you have repeatedly made that there should be no violence or bloodshed in connection with the strike in Flint.

It is only because of the coercion and intimidation on the part of the General Motors Corp., including incitement to violence, discriminatory discharge of union men, hiring of armed thugs and the use of company police that have led us to take the extraordinary measures for self-protection of the carrying on of the stay-in strike.

We are advised that it is intended to have us ejected through the use of guns and force.

This will mean that the blood of workers will be shed.

We the workers in the plant are completely unarmed and to send in the military armed thugs and armed deputy sheriffs who will have absolutely no sense of responsibility for life will mean a bloody massacre of the workers in the plant.

This responsibility cannot be avoided by you.

We express our appreciation for your excellent attitude to date and your efforts in our behalf. We shall continue to look to President Roosevelt and yourself for support against the arrogant and selfish policies of the General Motors.

From Fisher No. 2 came a similar telegram which ended,

Governor, we have decided to stay in the plant. We have no illusions about the sacrifices which this decision will entail.

We fully expect that if a violent effort is made to oust us many of us will be killed and we take this means of making it known to our wives and children, to the people of the State of Michigan and of the country that if this result follows from the attempt to eject us you are the one who must be held responsible for our deaths.

Zero hour for the eviction and Women's Day happened to come together. Five hundred members of the Women's Emergency Brigade had come to parade in Flint. It was their first formal appearance. As they swept out of the Pengally Building, the streets were bright with the red caps of the Flint women and the green caps of the women from Detroit. Although there had been almost no notice given, there were women from Lansing, Toledo, Bay City, and Pontiac. The idea of a spearhead of the Emergency Brigade for the Women's Auxiliary with a distinctive armband and cap originated in Flint, but it spread like a prairie fire throughout the automobile industry. Their procession, gay with banners and bright caps, marched through the heart of Flint.

Cars took them down to the immense picket lines looped around Fisher No. 1, guarding the sit-down strikers from violence. This demonstration was unique in the history of labor. There must have been ten thousand pickets and spectators. The women marched and marched, their banners and caps brightening the crowd. The strikers themselves policed this amazing crowd and directed traffic, and at the request of their leaders dispersed it.

How the women felt about it this letter of Eleanor Gustafson to *The United Auto Worker* shows,

That day I marched through the Flint business district displaying to the crowds my union emblem.

That day I picketed Fisher Body No. 1.

But I wasn't alone. I was with five hundred union women.

And what a huge shivery thrill it was — showing those thousands of Flint residents lined up on the sidewalks that we were 500 strong — 500 of us willing to fight anybody in defense of our men and homes!

Then on to the Fisher No. 1 picket line! Every one of us — 500 brigadiers.

We made our way carefully through hundreds upon hundreds of cars — through traffic kept orderly by union volunteer traffic cops. No disorder anywhere.

As we piled out of the cars — 7 and 8 out of each — our boys in the plant cheered and waved. And we felt happy and proud.

Then with singing and shouting — with banners waving we joined the picket line. A beautiful, tremendous line. There were thousands upon thousands of us! Two lines, two abreast in each; patrolling the entire length and side of the north unit.

To see and hear ten thousand union men and women on guard and picket duty — to be a part and feel the spirit of many thousands, all battling together for a better life, is an exciting, overwhelming feeling that probably comes to each person but once.

I thought, "Let General Motors come out to Fisher 1 and look at this picket line — 500 women and thousands of men — and dare deny the strength and numbers of the union."

Back in the Pengally Building. Stairs, halls, and rooms overflowing with more workers, more union men actively engaged in strike duty.

For the coming of a union seems to workers like the coming of a

new life. That night in Pengally Hall they talked about this new life. Women from many different towns got up and talked about the many activities in which they were engaged, what they did for their children, of the classes formed, how their committees worked, how they made little plays about the episodes of the strike.

The hall was packed with women, the men standing in a fringe at the back. The chairwoman of the meeting had never run a meeting before. All of the women were finding in themselves new powers and new strength, and they had found each other. The meeting and the parade and the picketing had all happened spontaneously, born of the pressure of events.

Just as young Roy Reuther was speaking to the women, painting a picture of what Flint could be as a union town, not a picture of a far-off Utopia, but something within grasp, a union town with people free to join their own unions, better conditions and wages, and a labor temple where they could have room to hold meetings—word came that the vigilantes were forming and that they might rush the headquarters.

While the workers were looking at the vision of a new life, vigilantes were massing to menace their lives. Vigilantes were being armed by the Chief of Police over the head of the Sheriff who had warned against such procedure. On the day before, A. T. Parsons, Michigan head of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, was said to have been seen in Flint. He had registered at the Durant Hotel under one of his many aliases. Vigilante troops were being sent up by the city authorities to preserve "law and order."

This closely paralleled what happened in Akron, Ohio, during the Goodyear strike the year before. Then Pearl Bergoff, notorious strikebreaker, went to Ohio, exactly at the time that the "Law and Order League" was set up there.

The Flint Alliance now showed its true colors. The former members and instigators of the Flint Alliance became a vigilante mob. They were armed in a public building by arms belonging to the city of Flint. They made threats that they would "shoot the streets

clear" if demonstrations were repeated; that they would "shoot out the plants"; that they would "shoot workers down like dogs."

Word went out to hold the meeting together as long as possible as they were less apt to attack with a large meeting going on. It was known at strike headquarters that armed vigilantes had gathered at various points.

Late that night the union leaders were asked to consult with the authorities, the Colonel of the militia, the Sheriff and the Chief of Police. Newspaper men warned the organizers against going; they feared that the vigilantes would seize them. It was not claimed that an ambush was being prepared, but that the vigilantes would use this opportunity of "getting" the union leaders. Time passed and the leaders had not returned. Apprehension grew. At last they came back. An agreement had been reached between the union and the authorities.

But this agreement was soon broken. City Manager Barringer told newspapermen that he had no intention of keeping it. He made the statement: "We will go to the plant shooting."

On Thursday night there was a meeting at the Masonic Temple. An old city ordinance was resurrected which had been enacted deputizing citizens at a moment during the flood of 1913. Under this ordinance citizens could be armed. As many as a thousand were put upon the rolls. Chief of Police Wills prophesied, "There will be another Herrin massacre in Flint."

After that for a week tenseness grew daily. Governor Murphy exerted all the influence of his office, all his tact to see that no blood was shed. Every day increased the fear of violence. When a police siren was heard the workers thought, "It has come. They are attacking the plant." Whenever a car backfired, people jumped; and always, always came the rumors of the vigilantes. Some solution had to be found. It was found. General Motors settled with the union, on the early morning of January 12. One worker told of it this way:

"The general feeling had been that of soldiers settling into the trenches for a long winter. Then at two o'clock at night a telephone



rang and word went through the building — the settlement news. Word went through the building, 'It's over, the strike's over!'

"Others said, 'It can't be, 't isn't true, someone's trying to spread a rumor to get the boys out of the plants.'

"But it was true."

Homer Martin, Wyndham Mortimer, and others of the Executive Committee came to Flint next day to read the agreement to the workers.

What happened that day in Flint was something that no one who ever saw it could possibly forget. Never since Armistice Day has anything been seen comparable to its intensity. A mighty emotion shook the working people of that town. Joy and freedom dominated Flint's commonplace streets.

It was as if Flint had been under a spell for a long time, perhaps always. Fear and suspicion had walked through Flint's streets. People didn't dare to join unions. They'd get fired, they'd lose their jobs. Your next door neighbor might be a spy. No one knew who the stool pigeons were. The people who had got used to living that way didn't know how maimed they were.

General Motors had come into Flint and made a city out of a crossroads. General Motors had dominated the town. It had ruled its political life and it had set its face against unions. Men had organized on their peril. Unions were kept out by fear. And now that fear was over. No wonder that the people marching in the line stretched out their hands to their friends on the sidewalk and said:

"You can join now, you can join now, we are free!"

Freedom to join your own union seems a little thing. But one has to live in a town dominated by a great industry to see how far off a union can seem and how powerful the industry.

Now General Motors had bargained with the union officials. The long days of suspended violence were over. Here was the antithesis of a mob: the gathering together of people to express a great emotion. Such gathering together is at the very basis of civilization.

It is the intensification of the individual, the raising of his power for good to a thousandth degree.

No one in that crowd remained isolated. People's small personalities were lost in this great Halleluiah.

When the men from Fisher No. 1 had accepted the agreement they marched in a parade to the plants at the other end of the town which were still guarded by the militia. The barrier of soldiers drew aside.

The crowd with flags marched cheering into the guarded zone.

The strikers were coming out of Chevrolet No. 4, flags preceding them. There were flags on the steps and flags on the street. Flares lighted up the scene. Cheers for Governor Murphy filled the air. Strikers' wives were waving to husbands they had not seen for days. A woman held up a baby. The procession marched down the street. Another roar filled all space.

The Fisher No. 2 boys marched out. They marched out in military formation from the quiet of the empty, waiting plant, carrying neat bundles of their things. They became part of the crowd that was now bright with confetti. People carried toy balloons. The whole scene was lit up by the burst of glory of the photographers' flares. The big flags punctuated the crowd with color.

They shouted to the rhythm of "Freedom, Freedom, Freedom!"

Chevrolet Avenue was packed from bridge to bridge. People swarmed over the murky little Flint River with its new barbed wire fences. They came past Chevrolet No. 4 and they came up the street past Fisher No. 2. They came, flags at their head, singing. They marched from the plants back to union headquarters. The streets were lined all the way with cheering people. Men and women from the cars and marchers shouted to the groups of other working people who lined the streets, "Join the union! We are free!"

The marchers arrived in front of Pengally Hall. They gathered in increasing thousands. The hall itself was jammed. They no longer let people into the building. Inside and outside, the loud

speakers were going. Homer Martin, Wyndham Mortimer, Bob Travis and the other strike leaders addressed the roaring crowds.

The joy of victory tore through Flint. It was more than the joy of war ceasing, it was the joy of creation. The workers were creating a new life. The wind of Freedom had roared down Flint's streets. The strike had ended! The working people of Flint had begun to forge a new life out of their historic victory

## VIII. The Chrysler Strike

GENERAL MOTORS had settled but Chrysler had not. There were negotiations in progress but the workers were tired of waiting and sat down, this time in Detroit, a stronghold of the open shop. Again Governor Murphy had a new set of negotiations on his hands. An epidemic of sit-down strikes followed which turned Detroit upside down for weeks.

"Why," a woman cried, "people on the outside don't realize it, but Michigan has been having a revolution. Everybody has struck. Why it was perfectly awful when that dear Lily Pons was marooned on the twelfth floor of her hotel and left without food or drink. And not only the hotels, but the department stores! You couldn't go on Woodward Avenue and try to buy something without running into a sit-down. I tell you it's a revolution. And it's all the fault of the President and Governor Murphy. If they hadn't encouraged them this would never have happened."

"What do you think they should have done?" she was asked.

"They should have turned the machine guns on them in Flint, that's what they should have done," she replied, without hesitation.

This woman was only echoing a part of public opinion when she wanted the workers "mowed down."

Michigan, thanks to Governor Murphy, settled two major strikes and countless small ones without bloodshed, yet where well-to-do people were gathered together the Governor was criticized.

The average well-to-do person in Detroit would have found slaughter far preferable to what he termed "the flouting of the courts" and the "total disregard of the rights of private property." The majority of "respectable" people echoed wholeheartedly what

Congressman Hoffmann (Rep.) said on the floor of the House. Referring to Michigan he stated that certain events could be settled only with bloodshed.

Just what happened in Detroit to make delicate females so bloodthirsty? A statement in *The United Auto Worker* gave a good picture of events:

By the thousands and tens of thousands the workers began to stream into the Union. They began to make known their demands to the bosses.

They said: "We've suffered all these years. We've worked for thirty and thirty-five cents an hour. We've worked ten and twelve and fourteen hours a day. We've worked under conditions that were a danger to our health. We've lived in the constant fear of insecurity, never knowing when the foreman would decide he didn't need our services any longer, or perhaps we had grown too old and there were younger men to take our place! Our families have lived in constant insufficiency. We say now that these things must go! We have been waiting a long time to see this day. It is here. We are prepared. We have just begun to fight!"

And then the city of Detroit and the whole country witnessed one of the most amazing spectacles in American history. As though they were one man the workers of Detroit got into motion — not only auto workers either — but all workers: printers and launderers and hotel employees and electricians and Five-and-Ten-cent girls and bakers and waiters and cooks and messenger boys and cigar workers — all in one mass, men and women, Negro and white, all together — such an unending stream, that within a few weeks, the most notorious open shop city in the country became the most gloriously union-conscious!

But this was not all yet.

This wave of organization wiped the sweatshop out of Detroit. In many cases wages were doubled and more than

doubled for many thousands of workers. Tens of millions of extra dollars were made available to the workers of Detroit. Conditions of work were immensely improved. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children benefited.

The Chrysler sit-down was a shocking blow, but even more shocking were the sit-downs of little girls in the Five-and-Ten, and of the pleasant obsequious staffs of big hotels. That brought things home. That caused the jitters.

Detroit began to work herself up. It was a golden field day for detectives. It is said that Hudson's department store alone employed 1,400. They were everywhere, watching workers to prevent more sit-downs. Business places were guarded. In defiance of fire laws, staircases to office buildings were locked so that no "agitator" could sneak in. People turned shivering faces to the morrow. The orderly rich world of Detroit was turned upside down. Lily Pons had been marooned in the Statler, and Negro help had been seen sitting like customers in the Café Rouge. To the well-to-do Detroiter these were world-shaking occurrences.

Meantime the strikers had set up their orderly world in the Chrysler factories. Starting suddenly and without preparation, they developed a whole economy overnight. Kitchens were established. "Chiseling" committees and food-purchasing agencies were set up. Transportation bureaus, flying squadron patrols were organized. Men and women pickets had their captains and their appointed hours for duty. Plant newspapers were developed. Recreation and entertainment committees put on shows.

The ordered flow of the hours began with reveille at an early hour. Appointed duties for everyone followed, one after another. Within the plants there was the peace of order and stability, which gave the impression of a long-established way of life.

The patrols went their rounds within the barbed wire fence, great crates of "ammunition," bolts, hinges, etc., stood at orderly intervals. The flying squadrons made their rounds up one lane, down another, through the maze of the vast plant; past endless



barbed wire fences and equally endless picket squads. This supervised picketing went on day and night. The whole thing was as streamlined as the automobiles which these men produce.

Quite different were the accounts of the small strikes in the stores. Here girls made merry, shouted and sang, and gave examples of dash-arounds rather than sit-downs.

Well-to-do Detroit supped eagerly from these horrors. Ladies met one another in club room, dinner party, store, only to exchange tales of frightfulness.

"We were like children who pretend that firecrackers are German guns until they are scared to death," one woman told me. Detroit had reached the boiling point when worse happened.

The police, goaded by public opinion, brutally evicted sit-downers from some of the smaller strikes. Strikers, including women, were beaten and arrested, and even a woman sitting on her own porch was ridden down by a state trooper, in quite the grand old Pennsylvania Cossack style. (In 1919 I used to sit in the bay window of a County Detective's house in Braddock, and watch the Cossacks drive people up their own doorsteps.)

A roar of indignation went up from the Automobile Workers. Homer Martin talked of general strikes if such doings were not stopped immediately. He wrote letters to twenty-nine unions to stand by. They replied with enthusiasm. A mass meeting of protest was called for Tuesday, the twenty-third of March. The County Council refused a permit. The Auto Workers said they would hold the meeting anyway. The County Council granted the permit. It was like the father who said, "Then *don't* eat your spinach. I *will* be obeyed!"

It was now that Detroit folks really began to work themselves up. Now the worst fears of people were fulfilled. This meeting proved that there had been a revolution all the time. Chief of Police Pickert telephoned to all the mid-town offices telling them to send their office help home early. He hinted riots. His telephone calls had a great effect. Public apprehension was puffed up to incredible extent.

Doomsday came, and with it there came to Cadillac Square, in solemn array, all the hundreds of police of Detroit.

They arranged themselves around in the square, to impress the populace with the majesty of the law. Wrecking crews, patrol wagons, and motorcycle cops deployed.

Then came the anti-climax. The workers arrived in tens of thousands. They packed Cadillac Square, and overflowed down the side streets. It was estimated that there were 150,000. But they maintained perfect order. Bursts of song came from them. *Now the Boss Is Shivering in His Shoes*, *Parlez-Vous*, and again, *The Star Spangled Banner*, followed by *Solidarity*.

It was a tremendous protest for civil liberties, but it was as orderly as it was great. The hundreds of police were engulfed in the crowd.

They had not been needed, and they vanished, swallowed up by the crowd's immensity. The crowd was always in gentle motion, adding new groups of workers with their banners flowing through the crowd like a river in a sea. Huge slogans moved perpetually through the people: *G. M. — Chrysler — Ford Next. Police Clubs Are No Way To Negotiate With Workers. You Can Beat Us But You Can't Defeat Us. Down With Police Brutality. You Sat On Us Long Enough, Now We're Sitting On You*. A boo, like the roar of the sea reverberated through the square when Police Chief Pickert or Mayor Couzen's name was mentioned.

But the balloon of panic had been exploded. The terror had turned out to be no terror at all, but a big crowd of well-behaved citizens. So well-behaved that the *Detroit Free Press*, which had done nothing but view with alarm, came out with a congratulatory editorial about the U. A. W. A. and their demonstration. And the other papers said the much-feared crowd had taken on a carnival attitude.

Meantime, the strike-settling factory, presided over by Fr. Sidenberg in the Book Cadillac Hotel, continued to settle strikes with incredible velocity.

Then at last Governor Murphy brought John L. Lewis and Walter P. Chrysler together. After a day of strenuous arguing a

sudden truce was declared. The manager agreed to move no machinery, manufacture, or sell no new cars while negotiations were in progress. For this the workers were to evacuate the factories.

There was the rub. The workers were in no mood to evacuate the factories. They were all geared to sit, until the United Auto Workers were acknowledged the sole bargaining agency.

At half past one in the morning in front of the Dodge plant, dark figures walked up and down in the picket line, waiting for the arrival of the union leaders from Lansing. The workers gathered around a great glowing fire in a metal barrel. They would have no truck with reporters, and would not have their photographs taken by the cameramen. In the little restaurant nearby, girls asked the young cameraman from *Life*, "When have you news reporters ever taken a decent picture of us?" and discussed among themselves the means for prolonging the sit-down.

A big, blue, special bus drove up the blizzard-swept street, and the leaders were passed in one by one, Martin, Frankenstein, Germer, and the others, about to begin their twelve-hour speech-making.

Finally all six plants agreed, but not until the workers had decided that they could continue the strike just as well outside as they could by sitting inside.

"We decided to come out because we knew we were strong enough to come out," one of the union secretaries said — a man with a lean, shrewd, fighting face. During the day, between one in the morning and six at night, the workers lost their dismay, mapped out a new plan of action, got a spiritual second breath, and finally left their factories with a triumphant tread.

They came out of the Chrysler-Jefferson and Chrysler-Kercheval, and the other factories. An American flag, with a color guard on each side, led the procession. For the great American flag and the seventy-five piece band and the blue and gold U. A. W. banner had to go from plant to plant as each one of the six came out. In the first plant the three now speechless leaders, Homer Martin, Wyndham Mortimer, and Richard T. Frankenstein led the workers out,

but by the time the colors reached Chrysler the leaders had gone to a much-needed rest.

The Emergency Brigade with their green tams and one red tam from Flint swept out with the men, and then came the rank and file, coat collars up, against the snow-swept street, carrying blankets and homely domestic bundles.

As they went out the big State Police took over the plants, with the agreement that no one was to be let in or out until the negotiations were settled.

\* \* \*

Now came the period of the unauthorized strikes which caused such a to-do and presented the opportunity for the charge of "irresponsible" which labor's enemies have used against it. The new outbreak of sit-downs was caused by what a local paper euphemistically called, "misunderstandings attendant on the new shop steward system." Plants in Pontiac, Cleveland, Flint, and other cities were closed. The outcry of the press drowned the statements of union officials who insisted that "the grievances which caused these strikes were of such a nature that they could have been settled without any trouble by following the procedure set up by the General Motors agreement. It is stated by the management that the U. A. W. A. can't control its membership. The union charges that General Motors can't control its plant managers."

In other words Mr. William S. Knudsen may have bargained with the union, but John Doe, local plant manager, does not. For twenty-five years the plant managers of the big auto plants have fought union labor by discharging union members. General Motors alone had spent over \$800,000 in one year on the spy system to keep union labor from the plants.

On the other hand, the auto workers were young men. They are Americans, and they had just terminated a successful strike whose bitterness had not yet been blunted by time.

How large an element of provocators was in these sit-downs, no one will ever know. The workers believe, and there is much evidence to show, that provocators were a considerable factor in the un-

authorized sit-downs. The workers refused to call them sit-down strikes. They preferred the name "strength demonstration." But whether caused by impatience on the one side or by provocators, they served the purpose of forming the focal point of attack for the anti-union forces. A nationwide movement to combat sit-downs was organized by the Executive Committee of the National Auto Dealers Association, and religious and civic organizations were urged to take part.

Meanwhile workers in Pontiac poured into the union.

"Can't sign 'em up fast enough," an old-timer said. "Must have signed up 2,000 myself last Sunday. Why, when this strike started over in Flint, we didn't have much more than sixty in our local. Now it's getting up close to 20,000. Twenty thousand out of about 27,000 auto workers in Pontiac in all — that's pretty good. I tell you, this town has been a tough nut, but it's a union town now!"

Pontiac had been a tough nut to crack. It's another General Motors town, made by General Motors, and owned by it body and soul. It was one of the strongholds that wiseacres prophesied could never be organized. They were wrong. It is going to be organized 100 per cent.

Eight hundred workers are said to have joined up at Yellow Truck since the stay-in. Hundreds more have joined Fisher Pontiac. The unorganized workers were allowed to go home quietly, but instead of starting a "back-to-work" movement, or grumbling, they didn't stay home. They turned around and went in hundreds to the union hall to join up. They did this as spontaneously as the workers decided to stay in. There was no coercion and not even any urging to get them to join the union. They flowed in as naturally as water flows down a hill.

Meantime Detroit was shocked in its upper brackets by the spectacle of Governor Frank Murphy being left sitting without dinner in the Book Cadillac Hotel when an unexpected, spontaneous sit-down stopped all the service there. Two hours and a half later the 350 strikers marched out peaceably in charge of the 400 police — more than a policeman each — sent to the hotel to evict them.

The Hotel Statler in a hurry hastily shut the Rouge Room and the Cocktail Bar, and stopped its elevators at the mezzanine.

A conference was hurriedly arranged between President William S. Knudsen and Homer Martin to adjust the situation. Strikes were settled by negotiations with managers and union officials. Great demonstrations marked the return of the sit-down strikers.

Up in Lansing, Governor Murphy, John L. Lewis, the union forces, and Chrysler were conferring. Presently the wide and dignified streets of the state capital echoed with the tramp of several thousand union feet, and the tune of *Solidarity Forever*, played by the seventy-five piece union band which the week before led the Chrysler workers out of the seven striking Chrysler plants.

The day before, a handful of Chrysler foremen, less than a hundred, greeted with cheers the return to Lansing of Walter P. Chrysler and turned sour looks on Richard Frankenstein and the other union officials returning to resume the interrupted settlement conference. The union countered with a demonstration of thousands, but they gave Chrysler no sour looks and shouted to him in friendly fashion. Hundreds had been expected when thousands came.

In the middle of the morning the cavalcade began arriving from Detroit. A huge gay picket line was formed which seemed never to end. It led from far down the street four abreast to the stately capitol. Good temper and gaiety marked the crowd's spirit. When it seemed as if the parade had ended a new delegation arrived with honking horns.

Led by the American flag, escorted by two color guards and followed by the gold and purple United Automobile Workers of America banner, the demonstration swept onward. First came the leaders of the flying squadron in their blue and gold fatigue caps. The green berets of the Women's Auxiliary came next. Then the thousands of marchers with their quickly improvised banners and the small blue and white flying squadron flags.

The demonstration, which was totally unexpected, was very thrilling to John L. Lewis, who is said to have turned to Chrysler, saying:



"Those are real American workmen, Mr. Chrysler!"

To which Chrysler responded with feeling: "I know they are."

The crowd massed itself in front of the state house. In the front stood a man and a woman carrying two slogans: *Mr. Chrysler, We Still Think You're Fair, Prove It!* and the other, *We Will Go Back When We Get Our Rights*. Other slogans scattered through the crowd were: *Three Little Words. Then I Love You. Thou Shalt Not Muzzle The Ox That Treadeth Out The Corn. We're With You, Mr. Chrysler, If You're With Us. Will Chrysler Lead Again With Human Rights?*

Later the Chrysler workers went six miles to visit the Reo strikers and in the afternoon, they re-assembled in front of the state house when the principals came out on the balcony for speeches. Governor Murphy with John L. Lewis on his right and Walter P. Chrysler on his left stood on the balcony looking down on the assembled Chrysler workers. The Governor — their leader, John L. Lewis — and their employer, Mr. Chrysler.

The great meeting at the Coliseum addressed by John L. Lewis seemed to mark the end of an epoch. The huge auditorium in the fair grounds had not a vacant seat. Scarcely a place to stand. Thousands were outside held back by the flying squadron. Cheer after cheer roared through the great space, as the various locals paraded in with their bands: Briggs, with its banner noting that they had 22,000 members, all the great Chrysler locals, delegates from General Motors locals. Far above, almost at the ceiling, people were sitting. One man led the cheering and kept time with the band with a flashlight, which cut through the blue dust like a star.

It was the last demonstration of two weeks of remarkable demonstrations by the auto workers. Now this monster meeting came as though it were the end of the first phase of the organizational drive of the United Automobile Workers of America.

To the march of hundreds and thousands of feet, the Chrysler strike was settled. Reo and Hudson also signed.

The auto workers were going ahead toward the objective set by Martin — not to stop until every auto worker is organized.

And that meant Ford.

## IX. "Ford Next"

AT THAT MEETING of 20,000 workers in the Coliseum at Detroit, one looked down into a sea of young faces. The Auto Workers Union is a young man's union. These workers are overwhelmingly American. The foreign labor which was first employed has been largely replaced by workers from the South, from the hills of Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee. It should be noted that these men come from that section of the South which is trying to maintain the open shop. They come from the same stock as that "docile 100 per cent American labor" which the southern chambers of commerce are continually offering as a bait to northern capital.

The auto workers entered their second phase with a double task before them. The first was the education of their new membership. How great this task was Homer Martin noted when he said:

It has been a tremendous task to educate this new membership in collective bargaining and the ideals of the labor movement. But it should be remembered that the management needed education as much as did the membership in the meaning of collective bargaining.

However, we say that the automobile workers as a union are suffering from the growing pains that any other vigorous labor movement would suffer from. We are not excusing ourselves, or our members from participation in unauthorized strikes. We let management assume its own responsibility for breaking its agreement with us. We stand unequivocally by our agreement and say that our unions are going to observe their contracts. The Auto Workers Union has taken a position

against unauthorized strikes as definite and as unequivocal as that of the United Mine Workers of America, or as that of the International Ladies Garment Workers.

To curb these turbulent unionists, the auto workers had a young, vital, if inexperienced leadership, headed by Homer Martin, whose experience as a Baptist minister convinced him that it was no use trying to care for people's souls when low wages and bad working and living conditions decreed such squalor for them. While Vice-president Hall, Secretary-Treasurer Addes, and Richard Frankenstein were all young, they had the experienced trade unionists like Wyndham Mortimer and soon the pressure of events developed a score of able organizers from the industry.

Nor should the part played by C. I. O. organizers be forgotten. Philip Murray and John Brophy helped to outline the auto campaign in the fall of 1936. Adolf Germer and Powers Hapgood and other experienced organizers were assigned to the C. I. O. John Brophy's mature advice was used in many crucial moments of the strike. During the long gruelling negotiations of both the General Motors and Chrysler contracts, John L. Lewis, Lee Pressman, and other C. I. O. organizers were never absent.

While the education was in progress, the great task of storming the most impregnable citadel of the employers, that of Henry Ford, was also undertaken. Henry Ford is peculiar among the employers. With over a billion dollars he has no minority stockholders to challenge him. No employer of labor is as independent of public opinion as is Henry Ford. He employs a quarter of a million men and his holdings are scattered from lumber tracts in the north to rubber principalities in Brazil. He has factories in every civilized country in the world and it is to be noted that those in Europe are, of course, organized. Whole communities are dependent on his whims. No oriental despot has greater power.

The heart of the Ford organization is the River Rouge plant, said to be the largest industrial unit in the world. Employing over 80,000 men it covers 7,250,000 square feet. The products of the

River Rouge plants are shipped to assembly plants all over the country. The River Rouge plant is like a bastille. Ford is as independent of detective agencies and strikebreaking organizations, as he is of banks. He has his own strong-arm men known as “service men.” It is over this thrice-guarded industrial fortress that the United Auto Workers sent an airplane in the early days of the Ford drive. They could speak to the men whom they could not get to meetings. For a few days the shining airplane circled above the River Rouge plant and it carried to every Ford worker who saw it the message — “Organize.”

For Henry Ford had set himself to buck the National Labor Relations Act. He stated uncontradicted, “We will never recognize the United Auto Workers Union or any other union. Labor union organizations are the worst thing that ever struck the earth because they take away a man’s independence.” His reason for hating labor unions is unique among employers. He believes them to be fostered by the bankers for the enslavement of workers. Unique in the conduct of his business, he is unique in his reason for his antagonism to labor unions. It was this great industrial domain that the United Auto Workers set out to conquer.

Already they had been nibbling at the fringes. There had been strikes in Ford plants in St. Louis, Kansas City, and in Richmond, California — and some organization in Chicago, and agreements had been signed with the locals though not with the international union. This hairsplitting enabled Ford to say that he had never recognized the union. On May 26 occurred the now famous “Battle of the Overpass,” involving Ford in a struggle with the National Labor Relations Board which will probably not be settled this side of the Supreme Court.

For days it had been known that the union intended to distribute literature at the Dearborn plant gates. A *Detroit Times* photographer, who visited the River Rouge plants two days before the trouble, testified before the National Labor Relations Board that he saw the service men waiting around and that they admitted to him that a lookout had been kept for a couple of weeks for Franken-

steen and for Reuther, then the principal organizers in the Ford campaign. Not only were the Ford service men congregated here but there were Detroit prize fighters with taped knuckles, and other tough characters, some having long police records, waiting as a reception committee for the union men. Commenting on this the Board's decision states:

. . . the careful preparations made for weeks in advance by the respondent to prevent any attempt of the U. A. W. to distribute literature at the plant; the great increase in size of its service department; the presence at the scene of professional fighters and of individuals with known criminal records employed by the respondent; the experienced professional manner in which the attacks were carried out and the brutality with which they were marked; the playing of the most prominent parts in the riot by members of the service department and not by production workers; the payment by the respondent of the men who conducted the attacks; and the direct participation by Everett Moore, head of the service department — all lead inescapably to the conclusion that the assaults upon union men and women that occurred on May 26 were part of a carefully designed plan on the part of the respondent to prevent the distribution of union literature by the U. A. W. in the vicinity of the River Rouge plant.

The automobile workers had a permit from the city of Dearborn to distribute handbills. Reporters and news photographers were on hand, the same news photographers who had their cameras broken and who were chased from the scene. The union men went to the overpass across Miller Road at Gate Four. The service men shouted to them: "This is Ford property. Get the hell off of here!" They had gone only two steps when the union leaders, Walter R. Reuther and Richard T. Frankensteen, were attacked.

Let the Reverend Raymond P. Sanford, a Chicago minister who is representing the Conference for the Protection of Civil Rights, tell what happened to Frankensteen:

“ . . . A separate individual grabbed him by each foot and by each hand and his legs were spread apart and his body was twisted over toward the east, over to my left, and then other men proceeded to kick him in the crotch and groin and left kidney and around the head, and also to gore him with their heels in the abdomen, or the general range of his solar plexus.”

Another group of service men attacked a group of union women getting off a street car, twisted their arms and called them vile names. Reverend Sanford's account is as follows:

“ . . . The girls were at a loss to know, apparently, what to do, and then one girl near me was kicked in the stomach, and vomited at my feet, right at the end of the steps there, and I finally shot an imploring glance at one of the mounted policemen, to whom I had previously spoken, and he dashed over on horseback to the west side of the fence, and in a rather pleading tone, sort of ‘for God's sake’ tone in his voice, seemed to direct his remarks to this well-dressed gentleman in brown, and said, ‘You mustn't hurt those women; you mustn't hurt those women’; and I was attracted to the manner in which he spoke, because he seemed to speak as one not having authority in the situation and seemed to be pleading, rather, not to injure the women.”

The 22,000 word report of the National Labor Relations Board goes on recording what happened at the various gates. William Merriweather, one of the volunteers, was knocked down while the service men shouted, “Kill him, kick his brains out, stomp his face in!” Merriweather's back was broken and doctors testify that his injuries may prove permanent. Alvin Stickle, another U. A. W. member, was dragged into the plant office and there was severely beaten while Everett Moore, head of the Ford service department, watched. Many photographers had their films taken from them. Tony Marinovich had a severe concussion of the brain. The record goes on — a fairly unique act of planned brutality.

Ford has now been ordered by the National Labor Relations Board to “cease and desist” from



(a) discouraging membership in the National Union of United Auto Workers of America;

(b) dominating or interfering with the formation or administration of Ford Brotherhood of America, Inc.;

(c) organizing or maintaining, supporting or assisting vigilante or similar groups; or using its service department for intimidating its employees from joining the United Auto Workers Association;

(d) threatening, assaulting, beating, or preventing any labor organization from distributing literature;

(e) circulating or distributing literature of their own criticizing labor unions;

(f) interfering or coercing employees in their rights to organize, to bargain collectively.

He is also ordered to reinstate twenty-nine discharged men; to make up lost pay and to post notices throughout the Dearborn plants that he will cease and desist.

Ford intends to fight this order. The outcome of this conflict with the National Labor Relations Board is one of the most important in labor's battle. It affects not only the Ford campaign, but all the other victories that the auto workers have had up to this time.

Since the battle of the overpass the Ford campaign has gone on, although there have been many criticisms that it lacked the vigor of the earlier campaigns. It is impossible to tell how much underground work has been accomplished. The organized Ford workers are much like the boys in Flint, and they have one idea in mind which is to organize their fellow workers. Those who say that Ford will never be organized do not know the caliber of the boys who have already come into the union. They realize that the two pay raises they received since the union started its drive have not come from the good in Henry Ford's heart. A steady exposé has been going on in the *Auto Worker*, puncturing many of the fables told about Ford, among them that he pays higher wages than anyone. The discontent of the Ford workers wells over into the letters printed in the *Auto Worker*, of which the following is a sample:

Dear Editor: Well, boys, here's that man again and this time I believe we have something here. I had said that I was going to retire from these journalistic outbursts but things keep getting right critical on the job and so this old eye-opener had to get back in the line.

At this writing I have to report to you a brutality so offensive that even the witnesses at the affair will hate to admit having seen it.

I am presenting a religious heathen from the department M711X, in the personage of a man named Waite. He is a deacon in one of the largest churches in the city, where every Sunday you can hear him shouting the praises of the Almighty and during the week he returns to the factory in the capacity of boss in M711X and raises hell with his men and allows his temper to run away with him to the extent that at times he has been seen to snatch his hat from his head and stomp it to pieces in anger.

Last Friday morning, Sept. 24, this man Waite became angry with one of his Polish workers and grabbed him and kicked him unmercifully. The worker that he kicked is a man with a large family and consequently defenseless, so Waite thought, inasmuch as he would be afraid to squawk on account of losing his job.

Imagine, fellows, having to take such kicks and afraid to say anything about it in order to provide bread and butter for your family, while a dirty, bullying scoundrel like Waite stands over you and utters oaths never heard of before and goes behind your back and laughs to his Canadian and Scotch friends about his racial prejudices.

While he runs around and does all his bullying, another rat named Erickson does all his work for him. Waite swaggers through the department and blows off about how he would like to tar and feather a few fellows. When we hear remarks like this we wonder if certain members of the Black Legion aren't still running loose in M711X.

Where were the officials of the Ford Motor Company when this brutality took place? Certain officials can be on hand to spy on fellows when they come from the lavatory, but when one of the bosses kicks a man unmercifully no one in authority is to be seen.

In time it will be a place where mothers and wives won't feel safe to send their sons and husbands to work unless they send them heavily armed on account of these heathens who call themselves DEACONS and BOSSES and go around quoting the scripture while they take advantage of men who need their bread and butter.

MEMBER  
FORD LOCAL U. A. W.

So the Ford drive goes on. The members in the River Rouge plants are no paper membership but pay their dues and are part of the union activity of Detroit. Faced with a depression and layoffs the auto workers have nevertheless voted to accumulate a half million dollar war chest for the purpose of organizing Ford. Each employed member is assessed one dollar a month and the twenty-four Executive Board members and the hundred or more organizers are to make voluntary contributions of 10 per cent of their salaries.

No union of the C. I. O. has been so discussed, so criticized, so much in the public eye as has that of the young, turbulent Auto Workers. It has been disrupted by tragic factional disputes, which it is hoped the depression and the need of organizing the common enemy Ford will do much to liquidate. Chief among the disputes has been that between the Progressive (administration) and the Unity (opposition) groups. It is a complicated affair based on fundamental differences of opinion over union policy such as must almost inevitably arise in any large democratic organization.

It is not the purpose of this book to try to untangle the rights and wrongs of this complex dispute. But attempts such as some writers have made to identify the Unity group as a communist group are entirely without justification. They are as absurdly disingenuous as

those of the Republicans when they label the New Deal “communist.”

The Unity faction includes the Reuther brothers, who are Socialists, and many other experienced organizers and union officials who belong to no left-wing party. Among them are organizers, union leaders, and rank and file members in great numbers who showed their metal during the great sit-down strikes. Their leadership showed ability, courage, and inventiveness unique in the history of unionism — qualities which brought victory in one of labor’s decisive battles. Whatever the merits or demerits of the Unity-Progressive conflict, Mr. Martin’s well-wishers can only regret that he should have joined labor’s enemies in the red hunt. To call everyone a red or a communist who differs from the administration in policy surely hurts the U. A. W. A. and the C. I. O. It plays directly into the hands of its enemies and ranges the accuser on the side of the Girdlers and the bureaucracy of the A. F. of L. When Mr. Martin placed the blame of the unauthorized strikes where it belonged — on the provocative attitude of management and the inexperience and youth of the union membership — his position was far stronger than when he echoed the enemy war cry of “Red! Red!”

This no union leader can afford to do. The red hunt was the weapon of the employer long before the Communist Party was formed. From the moment that factory workers tried to better their conditions by organizing, the employers have used the witch hunt with its battle cry of “Red!” to prejudice the community against the workers.

The spectacular developments of the sit-down strike and the unauthorized strikes have filled the public mind so that the constructive aspects of the union have been overshadowed. One of the best aspects of the United Auto Workers is the fine work which they have done among the Negro workers. Negro workers are organized throughout the industry but in the Ford foundries, where Negro workers are said to die like flies from the speed-up and the heat, they are organized strongly into Local 281 of the U. A. W. A.

They led the way in the Women's Auxiliaries. They were the first union to install a department for industrial diseases, now abandoned temporarily during the depression. They pioneered again in buying and distributing cheaply 200,000 copies of *The Flivver King* by Upton Sinclair. Out of every dollar five cents goes for education and 4,000 auto workers attend classes — a beginning anyway.

Against the failure in the political field must be set the fact that it is partly due to the auto workers that so fine a spirit of cooperation prevails between the industrial workers of Michigan and the farmers.

It is impossible to estimate what a change the U. A. W. A. has caused in the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of workers and in whole communities. With its many mistakes of youth which its great achievements overbalance, it remains the most vital and interesting of the new unions.

## X. Steel Signs Up

SHORTLY AFTER the great auto victories of General Motors, the unbelievable happened. On March 2, U. S. Steel bargained with the Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. The signing of an agreement came with dramatic suddenness. It is said that even the president of U. S. Steel, Benjamin Fairless, learned about the pending agreement between John Lewis and Myron Taylor only the day before. It came not only as a surprise but as a betrayal to the heads of the big independents in steel, the irreconcilable enemies of union labor: Bethlehem, National, and Republic Steel.

This change of heart that came to U. S. Steel has already entered the realm of legend. There are stories that Mr. Taylor retired for a whole summer's meditation to his villa in Florence and his meditation was rewarded by the Holy Ghost of Reason that descended upon him in a ten-word formula which took all summer to polish.

There are stories that Mr. Lewis and Mr. Taylor met socially, by chance, and that from this meeting grew the formula, and that Mr. Taylor convinced the great partners of Morgan of the righteousness of his new point of view. Others stress the point that Mr. Lewis went to England last summer with the express purpose of seeing Mr. Taylor. It is certain that John Lewis and Myron Taylor had prolonged and secret conferences.

The most plausible explanation is that business reasons influenced the house of Morgan, which in turn governs the finances of steel. Mr. Walter Runciman, head of the British Trade Commission, paid a brief visit to America. He was looking over the ground to place large orders for building up the British naval program, especially for armor plate. He learned with amazement, it is said,



of the anti-labor policies of the big mass industries, especially of steel. He was supposed to have asked how Britain could place large orders when they could not be assured of continuous production, and far from being assured of continuous production, an emerging labor movement in steel, represented by the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, made a major conflict inevitable unless there was a union with which to bargain. He pointed out that for years England had bargained with its labor with satisfactory results.

Moreover, unless labor conditions were such that they could comply with the Walsh-Healy Act, it would be impossible to bid for our own naval construction.

The lesson of General Motors loomed large. A whole winter's business had been lost by them and in the end they had settled. Thomas Lamont, Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., the Morgan chairman of the finance committee of U. S. Steel, and Junius Morgan became convinced that it was time for U. S. Steel to change the labor policies which had clogged any advance since the crushing of the old Amalgamated two generations ago.

It is said that the bankers computed how much such a strike would cost, how much spies and police were costing and balanced this against the wage increase organization would bring. It was cheaper to sign an agreement with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee.

Kept secret so that it might make its dramatic impact, it mightily disconcerted the independents. Myron Taylor has received the blame and the praise. Its contract has been a pattern for the hundreds of others since signed. The corporation agreed:

- (1) to recognize the Steel Workers Organizing Committee or its successors as the collective bargaining agency for its members;
- (2) to refrain from any discrimination against the union or its members;
- (3) to raise the minimum daily wage on March 16 to \$5.00 and

reduce weekly hours to five eight-hour days, with time-and-a-half for overtime.

The S. W. O. C. agreed:

- (1) not to intimidate or coerce workers into membership, and
- (2) in case of disputes to rely on negotiations and, if necessary, arbitration rather than an interruption of work.

Immediately after the signing, membership increased as never before. An accurate count showed a gain of 35,000 in the first two weeks.

The Supreme Court decision, April 12, finding the Wagner Labor Relations Act constitutional, climaxed the series of successes of the C. I. O. It meant the reinstatement of the Jones & Laughlin employees fired for union activities, among other things.

On that day the offices of the S. W. O. C. were in a turmoil. It was practically impossible to see any of the officials. They were all "negotiating." The Jones & Laughlin employees sat around the offices. News came that the Hubbard strike was settled. Organizers had come up from different sections of the steel empire. The aluminum workers in New Kensington were holding a convention, voting to affiliate themselves with the C. I. O.

With the favorable Supreme Court decision, with Union agreements signed by steel and the automobile industries, the whole status of labor in the United States changed.

Negotiations were in progress with most of the important independent companies, such as Jones & Laughlin, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Wheeling Steel, Crucible Steel, International Nickel Company of Huntington, West Virginia, Timken Roller Bearing Company, Canton, Ohio, and Bethlehem Steel. From all sides workers who had no relation to the steel industry were asking the S. W. O. C. to organize them. The Armstrong Cork Company was merely an instance of dozens of other similar incidents: A committee of five men came asking to be taken into the steel organization. There were twelve hundred workers, about half of them

girls. John Brophy was uncertain under what formula they could come into the organization.

Finally, they were given a petition to sign, asking for membership in the C. I. O. In a short time they came back with all but fifty of their shop signed up, and temporary officers were elected. The thirty members of the company union unanimously resigned. They signed a contract identical to that of U. S. Steel, with a more liberal vacation for workers. The men receive ten cents and the girls seven cents more an hour.

The employers, too, were asking the S. W. O. C. to straighten out their labor difficulties.

While I talked to Clinton Golden, regional director of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, a visitor was announced. "This man represents another type of thing that has happened to us. This man has had labor trouble. He has no relation to the steel industry, but a friend of his who has recently signed a contract after a strike, advised him to come to us to make an agreement with his workers — so here he is."

It was a different world than that of the S. W. O. C. meeting the previous November. The relations of the employers and workers had passed through a revolution, and what the C. I. O. as personified in steel was striving for, was the power of stability. They were going ahead quickly, and quietly, without fireworks, building a solid union responsible for its agreements. It was the era of negotiating and solidifying the gains of the S. W. O. C. and making its reputation that of a responsible and respected organization.

I made way for the employer who had come to have his labor trouble straightened out. Outside I ran into Albert Atallah. I had seen him last in Aliquippa, in the days when holding a meeting at all in the town was a victory.

It was a year ago that Atallah went to Washington with a delegation of workers to talk with John Lewis and the C. I. O. about organizing steel from the point of view of the rank and file. Atallah walked around like a man in a dream. He had seen the dark valleys open up. Now, he was organizing in the Kiski Valley. Here were the

non-union towns of Vandergrift, Apollo, Ovenmore, Leechburg, and Hyde Park. He told the story of Apollo Steel 90 per cent organized — West Leechburg Allegheny Steel 95 per cent organized — Hyde Park Foundry, solid 80 per cent.

“And only a little while ago they were firing men like these because they dared to talk of a union.” Atallah waved his hand around the room, where the Jones & Laughlin employees were sitting.

I went up to New Kensington where the aluminum convention was being held. I passed the unbelievable, fantastic landscape of the steel towns — houses clinging by an eyelash to steep hillsides, spans of vast bridges, row upon row of giant smokestacks. There is no other landscape like it.

This is the Allegheny Valley, known as the Black Valley. Up here in Breckenbridge, Fannie Sellins was murdered in 1919. Near here the coal miners, protesting against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, were beaten and fired on. All union labor was crushed in the Black Valley for a generation. Only the miners kept the union flag flying. Now the Black Valley is black no longer. Not only is steel organized, but glass and aluminum. The Valley buzzed with union activity of every kind. There were thirty-one delegates from a half dozen states, the new union claimed 12,000 members, 6,200 of whom are in the strong local of New Kensington, which has been chosen for headquarters.

How much a union was needed by aluminum workers, one can learn from Mary Pele, the Financial Secretary of the Organization. She worked for seven years in the plant in various capacities and when she was fired she was making eighteen cents an hour. This was in 1933. She joined the union when the N. R. A. came in and got fired two days later but not before she had organized her department 100 per cent. Under the N. R. A. the girls got twenty-five cents minimum but now they get forty-nine cents an hour and an hourly bonus, while the men get sixty-three cents.

“And have the working conditions changed? Why, if you went to get a drink the Boss would strangle you at the fountain and if you

dared to go to the toilet, he would have the nerve to come and yank you out." The union has changed all that. The new Aluminum Union is going into an intensive drive for all the aluminum workers, who number between 50,000 and 60,000.

I rode back with John Brophy from West Kensington.

"More has been done in this last year to change the long history of this Valley than in all the time before," he said.

As we got into Pittsburgh, newspaper headlines three inches high were announcing,

### COMPANY UNION DEAD

In steel the success in obtaining contracts peacefully continued without strikes of any importance until 189 contracts had been signed. Then in May, Jones & Laughlin balked at signing a contract they had long been negotiating and the workers struck. The strike lasted only thirty-six hours.

Victory came as a surprise. Aliquippa steel workers were geared for a long bitter struggle. Persons entering buses and other vehicles were scrutinized by groups of pickets watching for strikebreakers. Two roads meet at an angle to form the road leading to the undercut in the walls known as the Y. The stage here was set as for a drama. White-badged picket captains held back thousands of pickets massed in the front entrance of the plant. Two American flags stood sentinel. Both sides of the street were lined with a tense packed crowd. For blocks state troopers were the only visible police.

"The city police have been hiding since they gassed us," a woman said.

Suddenly a white paper like a flag of truce fluttered above the crowd.

It was Timko, the organizer, holding the signed agreement high above his head. That fluttering bit of white paper meant victory to 25,000 workers. It meant more. It meant that a break had been made in the wall of independent steel corporations opposing steel workers.

"I can't believe it's over," one girl said. "They were tear gassing us last night."

"Yes, last night Turner's vigilantes was bragging they was goin' to shoot us out."

H. T. Turner heads the vigilante company union of two hundred.

"Last night Sheriff Kennedy was arming seventy-five deputies when the Governor sent in the state troopers. Now it's over. We've won!"

"A victory has been won! Jones & Laughlin has signed an agreement with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. The strike is officially declared over," Joe Timko's voice blared out to the tense waiting crowd gathered in front of the Y of Aliquippa.

A great cheer from a thousand throats rang out.

"Go to your homes. Hold yourselves ready to work. Everybody join the union!" he said, but the workers wouldn't disperse. They stayed by the Y. They paraded through town. On May 20 in the government-controlled election they voted two to one for the S. W. O. C.



## XI. Violence—The Chicago Massacre

THE WORKERS had won at Jones & Laughlin, but there was trouble ahead. What Philip Murray called an "unholy alliance" had been formed by the Independents of Little Steel. Youngstown Sheet and Tube, which had been negotiating for a long time, now joined Inland Steel, and Republic, in saying it would make a verbal agreement but would sign no contract.

Meantime, Republic fired seventy-five workers, and closed the plant in Massillon where organization was strong. The S. W. O. C. charged unfair labor practices and appealed to the N. L. R. B. In May, the S. W. O. C. organizers met in Pittsburgh and voted to leave a strike call to the discretion of Philip Murray. In Massillon the workers took a strike vote without waiting to hear from Pittsburgh. There was considerable strike pressure in Youngstown. On May 26, the strike with Little Steel was called. It was spread through seven states and a dozen cities and involved 83,000 men. On May 30, the Chicago massacre occurred.

To the majority of employers, Tom Girdler of Republic Steel is a hero. He defied the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. He defied the National Labor Relations Act. Because of this eighteen men are dead. Let us first look at the way in which they died. Ten were shot to death at the Memorial Day Massacre in front of the Republic Mills in Chicago.

Let the dead walk before you, and acquaint yourselves with their names. There is Earl Handley, dead of hemorrhage because his wounds were not treated. Workers got him into a car and the police dragged him out and he bled to death.

Otis Jones had his spinal cord severed by a bullet in the back.

Kenneth Reed bled to death in a patrol wagon. A bullet had sliced through his back and into his abdomen.

Joe Rothmund was shot far down in his back. It was over the case of Joe Rothmund that Officer Higgins perjured himself before the La Follette Committee. On the stand Higgins said that Officer Oakes, lying down with Rothmund's knee about to hit him, shot in self-defense. He had testified differently before the investigators in Chicago, as they showed when they were brought to the stand. And the inquest proved that Rothmund was shot from a distance — shot in the back.

But perjury is common in the high Senate Caucus room. Perjury is the fabric of the officers' defense. Go on with the roll call of the dead:

Lee Tisdale died of blood poisoning from a wound.

Anthony Tagliori also died from a bullet in the back.

Hilding Anderson died of peritonitis.

Alfred Causey was shot four times and he died.

Leon Francesco was another who was shot in the back.

Sam Popovitch was not shot but his skull was battered to pieces by police clubs as he ran, an old man, bald, trying in vain to shield himself. The police ran after him and they beat him when he was down. You can see him in the Paramount film for yourself, a little scared old figure flying from the flailing clubs.

But these folks are not all the dead. There are others to be added to this procession of workers with their mashed heads, dead of blood poisoning, dead of wounds in the back, dead of peritonitis.

George Bogavitch of Youngstown belongs with these Chicago workers.

James Eperjessi, also of Youngstown, was killed there by deputies on Saturday night, June 19.

George Mike belongs with this long list of dead. He was a world war veteran, so wounded and gassed in the war that he was unable to work. He was selling tickets in front of the mill for a C. I. O. dance, and his skull was mashed by a long distance gas cartridge fired by another ex-service man. He was not even a striker. He had

come from Aliquippa to Beaver Falls to sell tickets for a social occasion.

Chris Lopez, beaten to death, was said to have died of heart disease.

Fulgencio Calzada of Massillon was shot in the back of the head on the night of July 11, when the deputies fired into a crowd.

Nick Vadios was shot through the abdomen and mortally wounded by these deputies.

A man in Cleveland was killed on the picket line when the troops tried to open the mills.

Seventeen are dead and ten more are seriously wounded. The number of minor wounds in the steel area goes far above one hundred and fifty. These are the treated hospital cases. The record of the smaller wounds, the gassings, will never be known.

Witnesses have come to Washington to the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee to tell how all this happened and how these men were wounded in the Memorial Day massacre. There are workers, a doctor, a minister, a lawyer, a social worker. Irrefutable evidence of an unprovoked slaughter. We can reconstruct what happened that Memorial Day Sunday from these numerous witnesses.

The right of peaceful picketing had been denied the workers. The reduced picket line had been driven far behind the railway track. Attempts to picket had been broken up by the police.

The strike began on the 26th; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, the picket lines were driven away by the police. There were clubbings and arrests. On Sunday, May 30, the workers assembled at "Sam's Place." The big map of the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee showed Sam's Place far off from the mills, separated by a waste field and a railway track. At Sam's place the meeting was peaceful. Various disinterested spectators testified that the people had come with their families as to a celebration. The women were dressed in their Sunday clothes. Fathers and mothers brought their children.

Leo Krzycki, a well-known organizer for the Amalgamated

Clothing Workers was one of the principal speakers. He joked with the crowd. A statement from the Mayor affirming the workers' rights for peaceful picketing was read. Some of the women sang. A vote was taken that the meeting should then proceed across the fields and picket the Republic Mill for the purpose of affirming the workers' rights to picket in accordance with the Mayor's decision.

The audience started out strolling rather than marching, by groups of twos and threes, groups of women marching together, women who laughed and chatted and talked among themselves, as Mrs. Lupe Marshall, the social worker from Hull House, testified.

Probably no group of people ever strolled more casually toward death and wounds. Some of the strikers deployed across the fields, apparently to see what was happening. There is a story of a man's carrying a branch of a tree. Mrs. Lupe Marshall says that she heard someone cry sharply to a worker who picked up a stone, "Drop that, we don't want any of that." There were no guns. The crowd did not even carry clubs. The police, on the other hand, were armed with revolvers, clubs, and tear gas as well as with hatchet handles such as the mill guards carry and which were furnished by the mills.

The testimony showed that the police had been eating in the mills and a platoon of fifty policemen was seen walking out of the mills that morning. The testimony goes to show that this was a planned attack; that the police came out with the intention of shooting down the workers and then arresting them wholesale. The police had planned to make this peaceful picket line seem like a Red plot to capture the mills. The brave policemen were to have warded off the revolution. But their plan failed. There were too many witnesses and too many cameramen.

So the two groups met: the unarmed workers with their two American flags leading them, and the police ready and waiting for the attack. In the Paramount Newsreel which was shown in the high Senate Caucus room you could see the leader of the strikers in the picture arguing peacefully with the police. He is earnest, emphatic, unthreatening. The testimony is that they asked for their

rights of peaceful picketing; they begged the police to let them through; that the Mayor had said they had a right to picket. The police testified that they used insulting language and they cried out that they wanted to occupy the factory and that they shot to prevent greater bloodshed in the factory. It is strange that the police defense was so overdone and stupid and that their lawyers should not have advised them better, considering that every steel worker and every thoughtful person in America knows that occupying the factory was not in any worker's mind. Another officer added a touch of the grotesque to the macabre testimony.

"They came along smoking cigarettes like they were doped. I supposed they were smoking marijuana. They seemed to be chanting a long, monotonous chant which seemed to go 'C. I. O., C. I. O.'"

"Is that what smoking marijuana does to one?" Senator La Follette asked with sarcasm.

The pickets argued with the police.

Suddenly there were shots. Some stones flew through the air. In a moment a heap of people were piled up within a few feet of the police line. This happened so quickly that you could hardly believe your own eyes, but there are stills that also tell the story, and some of these are worse than the Paramount film. There is a terrible picture of Mrs. Lupe Marshall with her hand slightly outstretched, as in a gesture, talking to a policeman (who, she records, called her a foul name), and as she talks, unconscious of what has happened, behind her is a piled heap of the wounded. There is another picture: Lupe Marshall has turned and sees the wounded. In another picture, she bends over them, and in this scene there is a frightful picture of a policeman with his club raised up for a shattering blow. The stills proceed. Now the workers are in full flight, hands up-raised. They face the murderous gunfire, the flailing clubs, the clouds of gas. But for sheer horror, the testimony of the bystanders of what happened on the way to the hospital, of what happened at the hospital, was more terrible.

The story of Mrs. Lupe Marshall is a shocking record. She is a

social worker, and the mother of three children, 15, 8, and 4. She is also a distinguished linguist and was helping put on a play at Hull House that very night. She did not put it on because she was arrested.

Tiny Mrs. Marshall weighs ninety-two pounds and is four feet, eleven inches high. You can see her being beaten and see that she has her head broken open by a club. You can see her in the photographs and the Paramount film trying to minister to fallen workers and you can see a policeman twice her size, towering over her and twisting her around viciously as he arrests her and shoves her into the patrol wagon.

Piled on top of each other in this patrol wagon were sixteen dying and seriously wounded. They lay every which way, on top of each other. They couldn't stand, they couldn't sit, they were falling over each other. The blood dripped upon the floor of the wagon.

Lupe Marshall tried to help them. She tried to lift them off each other and straighten out their wounded arms and legs. She pillowed one man's bloody head in her lap. He made a gesture that he wanted to smoke. She searched in his pockets to try to find his cigarettes but they were soaked in blood. Then he said.

"Never mind, you're a good kid," then he shivered, straightened out and died with his head in her lap.

They bounced, rattling, through Chicago streets. She did not know where they went. They seemed to go from place to place. The men were groaning and blood was oozing around her and the dead man lay with his head in her lap. Then at last they got to the hospital.

What happened in the hospital was almost worse than all the rest. The hospital was overwhelmed with the dead and the wounded! There were calls outside for volunteers to help the doctors *but the police tried to keep the volunteers from helping.*

There was a little wounded boy and Lupe tried to help the doctor with him, but the police drove her away. She came back and the police drove her away again. When at last her turn came to have her wounded head dressed she felt very sick from the beating and



the gas and the sights she had seen. The nurses wheeled her tenderly upstairs in a wheel chair. She went in the toilet and a policeman followed her there. He grabbed her, saying, "I guess you can walk all right," and dragged her down the stairs into the patrol wagon, to the jail. There they searched her. "What's that in her purse?"

"Communist literature, of course," replied the matron. The "Communist literature" was a handbill with an announcement of a meeting and an advertisement of a post-office auction sale. But every one of the scores arrested that day was booked as a Communist.

This stroll across the fields from Sam's place had to be made into a dark Red plot paid for by "Moscow Gold."

Harry N. Harper, the blinded man, was booked as a Communist. Groping, he had been led in and out of the meetings by his young and pretty wife. Perhaps his testimony was the most horrifying. His voice came out hollow and deep as though he himself had retreated far into the shadows. He told his story slowly, as though each word cost him a painful effort. From time to time Senator La Follette helped him with suggestions.

Harper was a steel worker, a boilermaker and welder employed by Interlake Iron. With his wife he had gone to visit his mother that bright Sunday. They had planned to go to the country. But his mother was ill and she was crying, for Harry Harper's brothers worked at Republic Steel. One was striking and the other was in the mill and she was afraid he was being kept there by force. Disturbed by his mother's grief, Harry Harper, the boilermaker bound on a holiday, went to Sam's Place, encountered the line of marchers, walked up to the head of it, and begged the officer to let him go to the mill to look for his brother because his mother was sick.

He found himself surrounded by hostile faces. They cursed him. "*They seemed,*" he said, "*to be intoxicated with something I can't explain.*"

There was a blast of a whistle and then hell broke loose.

"Seems as if they were going down, as if you'd taken a scythe."

He was struck on the left side of his head and the blood was running in his mouth. There was a blinding pain in his eye. He fled, blinded by pain and blood. He fell in a ditch. Another man lay groaning beside him.

"The man said, 'Help me, buddy.' I said, 'I am helpless myself.'" A gas bomb like a green ball of fire was sputtering beside him. It went off, affecting his other eye. He said, "A terrible trembling feeling came over me and I went back groping. I lost the vision of my right eye too. I called for help."

You could get a picture of him, his eye beaten out, blood running into his mouth, stumbling and groping and crying for help. He told, too, of his terrible ride in the patrol wagon. He could hear men groaning. He could hear officers saying, "Some of them are breathing yet, but we'll take the others to the morgue," and he knew men were dead or dying beside him. And when he groaned, they said, "Shut up, you damn so-and-so, you got what's coming to you."

He said, and his sightless face did not turn toward the police officers sitting in their uneasy indifference,

"Among those officers there were many of them brought up in my faith, for I am a Catholic, I went to parochial school and I attended Sunday School and Mass faithfully. I think they have forgotten what we all learned there, 'Thou shalt not kill!'"

\* \* \*

There is plenty of other testimony, that for instance of the lawyer, Frank W. McCulloch, Social Relations Secretary of the Council of Social Action of the Congregational Church. The meeting at Sam's place to him was a friendly holiday crowd asserting their rights to organize under the N. L. R. B. He saw a policeman seventy feet away from the marchers empty a gun and reach for another clip.

The Reverend Charles B. Fiske, a Congregational Minister, a minister concerned about civil liberties, had gone down as an impartial observer. He heard the shots, saw the people give way and he took pictures, as he thought, of the whole flight. He took pictures of men being beaten on the ground. In the end he was arrested

and thrown into jail and kept incommunicado for nineteen hours and his pictures were taken from him.

There was Meyer Levin's testimony. He is a writer and an editor of *Esquire*. He heard the outbreak of the shooting. He watched workers being shot down and he carried a bleeding child. He was kept by police out of the Burnside Hospital where volunteers had been called for.

Dr. Lawrence Jacques held a mannequin in his hand high up so the crowd could see. He jabbed at this with a pick as he showed where the wounds were made by police bullets in the Chicago Memorial Day massacre. Behind the two investigating Senators of the Civil Liberties Committee, Robert La Follette and Senator Thomas (Utah), were four charts. The chart showing a man's back is peppered with red spots. Each one of these means a gunshot wound. The doctor dropped the doll and moved to the charts. The charts of side views showed scattered wounds. On the chart showing the front view of a man there are no red spots. The dead and wounded were shot in the back as they ran.

The familiar story of the murder of workers was spread out before the people of this country. It was read into the record of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, before a distinguished Washington audience of five hundred. It is an old story — perjury and Red framing. You can see the dead and wounded dragged like sacks over the ground. You can hear of wounded workers dragged from cars to bleed to death, wounded workers snatched from the hospitals.

It is nothing new. The use of the police by the mills to shoot steel workers asking for their constitutional rights, is an old story. The shooting of workers in steel began in Homestead in 1892 and has gone on steadily ever since. In the steel strike of 1919, twenty-one people were killed, including Fannie Sellins who was shot by gunmen as she bent over some children to protect them. They killed steel workers in Ambridge in 1933.

The number of United Mine Workers dead in its long fight for organization is uncouncted. The mines of West Virginia are drenched with the blood of workers. The Ludlow massacres are fresh in every-

one's mind. Textile workers were killed in 1929 at Marion and at Honea Path, North Carolina, in 1934. The purpose of the killings is always the same. It is to crush the workers' lawful right to organize.

It is new that there should be a hearing at all, that the story should be accessible to the public. Here people could see how it's done. For once this familiar perjury was brought out by the photographs and by impartial testimony.

What is new is that gathered into one room should be unassailable and impartial witnesses — lawyers, social workers, doctors, ministers — who corroborate and fill out the story. What is new is that this massacre should be documented with hundreds of pictures and climaxed with a Paramount film. Wholesale murder, planned beforehand. . . . Well, who can doubt the collaboration of the mills?

In our estimate of this police brutality, let us not be mistaken. It is part of a country-wide plan, headed by Little Steel, to take from labor its recent gains and to confuse the general public with propaganda to give the impression that labor is violent and the C. I. O. irresponsible. In this hearing the country can see plainly what this plot is and recognize it as part of a vast frame-up against the workers.

## XII. The Steel Strike

TO UNDERSTAND the steel strike, or any of the modern conflict it is necessary to bear in mind that a conscious strikebreaking plan of a very practical nature has been evolved in what is known as the Mohawk Valley Formula. This plan was given to a waiting world by young Mr. James H. Rand, Jr., but is reported to be the invention of a famous public relations man specializing in industrial matters. Therefore, further consideration of the strike in Little Steel must be prefaced by the plan in full. It follows as outlined by the N. L. R. B. in the Rand hearing:

*First:* When a strike is threatened, label the union leaders "agitators" to discredit them with the public and their own followers. In the plant, conduct a forced balloting under the direction of foremen. This will give a clue to the union's strength and enable the employer to assert that the strikers are a small minority imposing their will upon a majority who want to continue working.

At the same time, disseminate propaganda, by means of press releases, advertisements, and the activities of "missionaries." Such propaganda, falsely stating the issues involved in the strike so that the strikers appear to be making arbitrary demands, will obscure the real issues, such as the employer's refusal to bargain collectively. Concurrently with these moves, by exerting economic pressure through threats to move the plant, align the influential members of the community into a cohesive group opposed to the strike. Include in this group, usually designated a "Citizens Committee," representatives of the bankers, real estate owners, and business men, i. e., those most sensitive to any threat of removal of

the plant because of its effect upon property values and purchasing power flowing from payrolls.

*Second:* When the strike is called raise high the banner of "law and order," thereby causing the community to mass legal and police weapons against a wholly imagined violence and to forget that those of its members who are employees have equal rights with the other members of the community.

*Third:* Call a "mass meeting" of the citizens to coordinate public sentiment against the strike and to strengthen the power of the Citizens Committee, which organization, thus supported, will both aid the employer in exerting pressure upon the local authorities and itself sponsor vigilante activities.

*Fourth:* Bring about the formation of a large armed police force to intimidate the strikers and to exert a psychological effect upon the citizens. This force is built up by utilizing local police, State police, if the governor cooperates, vigilantes and special deputies, the deputies being chosen if possible from other neighborhoods, so that there will be no personal relationships to induce sympathy for the strikers. Coach the deputies and vigilantes on the law of unlawful assembly, inciting to riot, disorderly conduct, etc., so that unhampered by any thought that the strikers may also possess some rights, they will be ready and anxious to use their newly-acquired authority to the limit.

*Fifth:* And perhaps most important, heighten the demoralizing effect of the above measures — all designed to convince the strikers that their cause is hopeless — by a "back-to-work" movement, operated by a puppet association of so-called "loyal employees" secretly organized by the employer. Have this association wage a publicity campaign in its own name and coordinate such campaign with the work of the "Missionaries" circulating among the strikers and visiting their homes. This "back-to-work" movement has these results: It causes the public to believe that the strikers are in the minority and that most of the employees desire to return to work, thereby winning sympathy for the employer and an endorsement of his activities to such an extent that the public is willing



to pay the huge costs, direct and indirect, resulting from the heavy forces of police. This "back-to-work" movement also enables the employer, when the plant is later opened, to operate it with strike-breakers if necessary and to continue his refusal to bargain collectively with the strikers. In addition, the "back-to-work" movement permits the employer to keep a constant check on the strength of the union through the number of applications received from employees ready to break ranks and return to work. This number is kept secret from the public and the other employees, so that the doubts and fears created by such secrecy will in turn induce still others to make applications.

*Sixth:* When a sufficient number of applications is on hand, fix a date for an opening of the plant through the device of having such opening requested by the "back-to-work" association. Together with the Citizens Committee, prepare for such opening by making provision for a peak army of police, by roping off the areas surrounding the plant, by securing arms and ammunition, etc. The purpose of the "opening" of the plant is threefold: to see if enough employees are ready to return to work; to induce still others to return as a result of the demoralizing effect produced by the opening of the plant and the return of some of their number; and lastly, even if the maneuver fails to induce a sufficient number of persons to return, to persuade the public through pictures and news releases that the opening was nevertheless successful.

*Seventh:* Stage the "opening," theatrically, throwing open the gates at the propitious moment and having the employees march into the plant grounds in a massed group protected by squads of armed police, so as to give to the opening a dramatic and exaggerated quality and thus heighten its demoralizing effect. Along with the "opening" provide a spectacle — speeches, flag raising, and praises for the employees, citizens, and local authorities, so that, their vanity touched, they will feel responsible for the continued success of the scheme and will increase their efforts to induce additional employees to return to work.

*Eighth:* Capitalize on the demoralization of the strikers by con-

tinuing the show of police force and the pressure of the Citizens Committee, both to insure that those employees who have returned will continue at work and to force the remaining strikers to capitulate. If necessary, turn the locality into a warlike camp through the declaration of a state of emergency tantamount to martial law and barricade it from the outside world so that nothing may interfere with the successful conclusion of the "Formula," thereby driving home to the union leaders the futility of further efforts to hold their ranks intact.

*Ninth:* Close the publicity barrage, which day by day during the entire period has increased the demoralization worked by all of these measures, on the theme that the plant is in full operation and that the strikers were merely a minority attempting to interfere with the "right to work," thus inducing the public to place a moral stamp of approval upon the above measures. With this, the campaign is over — the employer has broken the strike.

When history judges the steel strike, it will probably be rated as one of the most important battles of all the industrial warfare of this country. It could be fairly said that neither side won. For, if the workers suffered a defeat, the steel operators were not successful in their objectives. This was not 1919 and the workers were not crushed. Their heroic battle is one of the epics of labor.

Moreover, Little Steel had hoped to check the C. I. O. on a nationwide front. It was expected that General Motors would refuse to renew its contract with the Automobile Workers and that the other independent steel companies would cease making contracts while U. S. Steel itself might refuse to renew at the turn of the year. But the organizational drive was not checked. When the steel strike began there were 140 firms under contract with about 300,000 workers. By September, 415 firms had signed with nearly 500,000 workers.

The November elections showed how Little Steel had failed to check the onward march of the C. I. O.

The steel strike was not the usual industrial conflict. It was far

more than that. It was a challenge to the New Deal in which it was partially successful, since the independent steel companies literally got away with murder and succeeded in defying the National Labor Relations Act.

The seventeen killed, the 160 wounded, the hundreds gassed and jailed were caught in a swirl of issues far larger than the strike itself.

This attack on organized labor by Little Steel with its shabby pretext of being willing to make, if not sign, a contract such as U. S. Steel has signed, involves far larger issues than the "little" lives of a few thousand steel workers. It was the looked-for assault of big business on the Administration.

The steel strike emerged early in its true colors as a major political offensive against the labor policies of the President. Its object was not merely the crushing of labor and turning back the hands of the clock to the despotism which for two generations had ruled the steel towns — it had a larger objective.

Throughout the country, there was a careful build-up of the C. I. O. as a subversive, communistic organization. There was a premeditated identification of the President with the C. I. O. He was openly mentioned on all sides as its partner. He was pictured as the defender of the sit-down strike. This identification of the C. I. O. with communism was not only the chief stock in trade of the employers but also of the A. F. of L.

It is naïve to consider the steel strike the work of Tom Girdler and a small group of willful men. Every evidence points to Girdler's offensive having been a planned attack on the Administration by big business of which the independent steel companies were the spearhead. Behind them was the force of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, buttressed by the other powerful anti-Administration forces in Congress and outside.

The 83,000 steel workers involved in the strike were only incidents in the most important attack yet launched on the Administration. The election of Girdler, rather than William A. Irvin, as President of the Iron and Steel Institute, the votes standing ten to

ten, the deciding vote being cast by the absent Frank Purnell, was an indication of a premeditated plan. The steel strike was not planned alone by the three irreconcilable steel masters, Grace, Weir, and Girdler.

The building up of the mail case to a national issue from a case which local postal authorities say "wasn't nothing to worry about," with its speedy hearing; the storm of disapproval of Governor Earle's closing of the Johnstown mills — these were all parts of the anti-Administration offensive.

In many quarters it was thought not unlikely that the President's failure to defend the attack on the National Labor Relations Act by intervening in the steel strike, as had been expected, was a recognition of the attempt to identify him and the Administration with the C. I. O.

Several facts reflect a partial yielding to this propaganda. First, the Administration kept silent after the Chicago massacre. Next, Girdler, unrebuked, was allowed to defy the Secretary of Labor's Mediation Board, with what amounted to a statement that he had never intended to bargain collectively, and finally, the now famous "a plague on both your houses," showed that the President, ever sensitive to political winds, was bowing to the storm the powerful interests had raised inside and out of Congress.

The third objective was to render null the finding of the Supreme Court concerning the National Labor Relations Board. This federal law, which makes it a federal offense to penalize a worker for joining a labor organization and makes it obligatory for employers to bargain collectively with their employees, is more feared by reactionary employers than John L. Lewis and the C. I. O.

This battle was also an intermural battle among the steel masters. The Iron and Steel Institute had always been dominated by U. S. Steel. Now this dominance was challenged by the Independents.

Yet it is not at all unlikely that the steel strike was looked at benevolently by U. S. Steel and that the big company was pleased to see the power of the C. I. O. challenged by Little Steel.

While there is no doubt that Little Steel wants to take the leadership of the Iron and Steel Institute away from Big Steel, there is a contradiction when one comes to examine the finances of Big Steel and Little Steel.

Backing them one finds the same great banking houses. For instance, U. S. Steel is controlled by the Morgans, but the Morgans are also tied up with Bethlehem. Pickands, Marber of Cleveland, who are tied up with the Morgans, also control Youngstown Sheet and Tube, and have interests in Republic. It is impossible to untangle the financial backing. So behind the apparently opposed interests we find interlocked financial interests.

Youngstown Sheet and Tube pretended to conform to the spirit of the law by saying that they were willing to make verbal agreements but not signed agreements with the union. The reason given for this was the fear of the closed shop — a demand never made by the union.

There was never a stranger reason for a strike than that of Little Steel. On it General Johnson commented:

. . . But before the public condemns Mr. Lewis' tactics, it will look at the provocation on the other side: I will trade with you. I will 'in good faith' make an oral agreement with you. Why? Because while the law requires the rest, it doesn't require the writing. No sir. Before I'll write it, I will close my plant, take their livings away from thousands, see men shot and gassed and bludgeoned and accept responsibility for the mayhem and murder of many — all for a scrap of paper!

It seems incredible but that is the sole point in dispute in these steel strikes . . .

While John T. Flynn, famous economist, said in a syndicated article in the Scripps-Howard newspapers:

. . . The companies do not even shy at recognizing the union or entering an agreement with it. Then when all issues were ironed out the three big steel Independents — Youngs-



town Sheet and Tube, Republic Steel, and Inland Steel — refused to sign the agreement.

They were willing to make an agreement but they would not sign a contract. And these three great corporations which would not make a ton of steel without a signed order are willing to see their mill towns turned into battlefields, their workers in open battles with police, rather than put their signatures to agreements which they are willing to accept otherwise. . . .

It would be foolish not to admit that on the home ground of Youngstown, Girdler and his forces in the field of public relations outsmarted the forces of John L. Lewis and the S. W. O. C. The union never told its story to the people of Youngstown or the nearby cities. Nor did it make use of the fact that right through the days of the strike, a hundred steel companies large and small were signing with the S. W. O. C.

On the side of the management, preparations for the strike had been going on since the previous winter. Groups of ministers, of educators, of business men were entertained on company property and told what a terrible thing the strike would be to the community. The middle-class people were led to identify their interests with the management's.

Yet Girdler was an unpopular figure in Youngstown. He had driven Eaton to the wall and ruthlessly fired old employees in his reorganization of Republic.

How Girdler stood in Youngstown was shown by the full-page advertisement which Anton Dorfmueller, a prominent businessman and leading member of the Rotary Club, put in the local Youngstown paper. It was cast in the form of an open letter and said among other things:

"You can't starve these boys into submission. If they want you to talk to Mickey Mouse as their official representative, it's your job as chairman of the board and president, representing your stockholders and responsible to the people of this community, to talk to him."

A Washington columnist commented:



"Automobile Dealer Dorfmueller wants to sell cars to the steel workers, and he and all other businessmen in a strike-torn community have an interest in industrial peace. Law or no law, any powerful industrial leader, occupying a place of greater power and responsibility than most public officials, would seem bound by his own sense of responsibility to do what he could to avert these community calamities."

There was a substantial number of citizens in full agreement with Anton Dorfmueller and they could easily have been swung to uphold the union, but no attempt was made to do this. No advantage was taken of the fact that this feeling against Girdler existed. Indeed, the S. W. O. C. had concentrated its efforts around Pittsburgh, expecting its greatest conflict to be with U. S. Steel rather than Little Steel.

The truth was that no extensive planning was done, no long distance campaign was evolved by the S. W. O. C. A short strike was expected. Governor Davey is said to have assured union officials: "If they won't listen to me, I've got an ace in the hole. I'll close their ——— mills for them."

But the political wheels had long before been oiled up by the steel companies. Meanwhile, in the halls of Congress, a powerful anti-Administration and anti-labor group thundered their indignation at labor's non-existent violence until the general public began to feel that labor was the violent aggressor. And this in spite of the fact that seventeen dead and numerous wounded strikers (and none killed on the employers' side), furnished grim proof of armed warfare against both labor and the United States Government.

But steel masters are realists. There were other preparations. Here is the inventory of arms and munitions bought by the steel companies during May and June of 1937, as given by the Senate Civil Liberties Committee:

Republic Steel Corporation. . . .	Cleveland, Ohio. . . . .	6/7/37. . .	\$5,745.60
" " " . . . . .	" " " . . . . .	6/7/37. . .	3,003.00
" " " . . . . .	Canton, Ohio. . . . .	6/1/37. . .	2,489.12

Republic Steel Corporation . . . . .	Warren, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	3,077.82
“ “ “ “ . . . . .	Youngstown, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,531.82
“ “ “ “ . . . . .	East Chicago, Ill. . . . .	5/29/37 . .	2,767.42
“ “ “ “ . . . . .	Buffalo, N. Y. . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,129.06
Total for Republic Steel Corporation . . . . .			\$21,743.84
Union Drawn Steel Co. . . . .	Chicago, Ill. . . . .	6/2/37 . . .	\$2,081.20
“ “ “ “ . . . . .	Massillon, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	1,847.66
“ “ “ “ . . . . .	Beaver Falls, Pa. . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	1,352.66
Truscon Steel Co. . . . .	Cleveland, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,749.22
“ “ “ “ . . . . .	Youngstown, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,868.02
Corrigan McKenney Co. . . . .	Cleveland, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,953.32
Steel and Tubes, Inc. . . . .	“ “ . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,791.32
Upton Company . . . . .	“ “ . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,884.22
Niles Steel Products Co. . . . .	Niles, Ohio . . . . .	6/1/37 . . .	2,630.42
Grand total . . . . .			\$43,901.88

The complaint of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee to the N. L. R. B. stated: “Company officers and agents . . . have followed S. W. O. C. organizers and have brutally attacked and beaten them. The company, both prior to and since the strike (steel), has considerably increased the number of its police force for the purpose of interfering with the rights of its employees to picket the plants peacefully.

“The company maintains at its plants in Youngstown, Niles, Warren, Canton, and Cleveland, in the state of Ohio, extensive arsenals, stocked with machine guns, rifles, revolvers, tear gas, and other bombs . . .” and those charges have been confirmed in the N. L. R. B. hearings.

No wonder Girdler said, “*Sure we got guns!*”

## XIII. The Steel Strike—II

YOUNGSTOWN was the heart of the strike. Thirty-three thousand workers were affected in the Youngstown Sheet and Tube, and Republic, whose chimneys and tracks run like a river for miles through the center of the town. The 2,400 workers in Niles and the 6,000 workers in Warren, a few miles distant, were also included in this area.

Youngstown Sheet and Tube, and Republic in Youngstown were closed down completely. There was no attempt to run the plants. Only Carnegie-Illinois' triumphant blast went saffron against the sky, a constant reminder to idle Youngstown workers that at the beginning of the strike 140 separate companies had signed union agreements covering over 300,000 men.

John Mayo, who was a victim of the Bay City mobbing, was chief organizer for the Youngstown district; later John Owens, a native of Ohio, shared the command. Under them were the organizers for each mill. Youngstown Sheet and Tube was organized independently of Republic, and Briar Hill Sheet and Tube, at the opposite end of town from Struthers and Campbell, had its own organization. The strike activities resolved themselves into picket line and commissary duty. No time could be obtained on the radio. There was no central hall, so each of the six strike groups remained comparatively isolated from the others.

The core of the strike was the picket line. The union in Youngstown claimed a large majority, and many joined after the strike call. The union membership was built up solidly after nearly a year of organizing. It was necessary to organize quietly; John Stevenson, Campbell organizer, said that for months he spent six out of every

eight hours in house-to-house visiting. At first there were few open meetings, but there were a surprising number of "beer parties" on farms of former steel workers, often miles from Youngstown. Finally the union was strong enough to have open mass meetings. The union in Sheet and Tube rested on two blocks of picked men of five hundred each, called the organizing committee. The members of the organizing committee largely formed all the flying squadrons during the strike.

Early in April it was evident that the Independents would force a strike, and a systematic organization of pickets began. By the time the strike came, disorderly and uncertain elements had been weeded out. The picket lines during the day were small groups of people at all gates, at strategic points, on railway embankments all along the miles of boundary of the big steel mills.

"It may not look like so much, but I can get five hundred men out in a half hour, one thousand in an hour, at any point," John Mayo asserted. A system of communications was evolved by which key men communicated rapidly with those in their jurisdiction. "We had fifteen hundred on the picket line the other night in no time, when we had the all-night meeting with the Mayor and Sheriff and Chief of Police." This meeting was held after the Chicago shooting and was for the purpose of devising means to prevent a repetition of the bloodshed. It was held in vain.

All pickets were registered. Pickets were asked which gates they wished to patrol and which "turn" they wanted. There were four turns of six hours each. The pickets were divided into blocks of five with a leader for each group — parties of friends were encouraged to be together. There was one picket head and four division captains, one for each turn. Forty-two flying-squadron cars were attached to each turn. They patrolled the picket line and transported organizers and pickets to any point.

As has been stated, Remington Rand's Mohawk Valley Formula was used from the first. The strike was not a week old before the back-to-work movement started according to formula. The company union had been transformed into a so-called independent

union. The Republic "independent" union and the Youngstown Sheet and Tube "independent" union had opened offices, by an odd coincidence, next door to each other. A dark trickle of Negro boys went sheepishly past the pickets who carried signs — JOIN THE C. I. O. — YOU CAN'T MAKE STEEL IN A BANK. Groups of men watched the pickets. Other buildings had men and women before them. The Dollar Bank had only watchful men. These were deputies, most of them ex-soldiers. One of the independent-union officials was asked, "It must have taken some organization to get this going so soon?"

"Oh, yes," he replied brightly, "we had one hundred and sixty men out visiting the workers' homes all over the week-end."

That was only for Republic Steel. Youngstown Sheet and Tube had as many — three hundred missionaries circulating among the workers undermining them according to the Mohawk Valley Formula all over the long Decoration Day holiday, calling attention to the Chicago massacre. On the side of the workers there were no notable meetings, no literature to counteract these "missionaries."

This back-to-work movement gained momentum under the skillful handling of the attorney, Roy Thomas, locally nicknamed the "Number King," one of the triumvirate of bosses who rule Youngstown. It was rumored that he was to get a considerable sum of money for opening the mills.

The back-to-work movement in Youngstown had a greater mass support than in some places where the company unions had gone over en masse to the S. W. O. C.

Meantime, Governor Davey was negotiating with the mills, trying to find some way to make peace. Governor Davey's efforts at mediation failed. They not only failed but both Tom Girdler and Frank Purnell refused to attend the conference. They were "too busy," they said.

In the light of history one wonders if Governor Davey meant his efforts to succeed, or if he was playing for time for the mill owners. After the governors of several states appealed to President Roosevelt to intervene and end the strike which was in its fourth week,

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins appointed a Mediation Board. Intervention by the federal government followed an expressed belief by the President that companies who were willing to make oral agreements with labor should put them in writing. It was the first comment from the White House of this kind since the automobile strike — and the last.

The first meeting of the Mediation Board was on June 19, the day of the Youngstown killings when truckloads of armed deputies roved around Youngstown streets shooting down defenseless workers indiscriminately, whether children, women, or men. The Board was an irreproachable one. It consisted of Charles P. Taft, son of the late President and Chief Justice Taft, as Chairman; Lloyd Garrison, Dean of the Law School of Wisconsin, and Edward P. McGrady, then Assistant Secretary of Labor.

Taft, long a student of social problems and an adviser to Alf M. Landon in the Presidential campaign, is author of the "Toledo Plan for Industrial Peace," which calls for a board representing labor, management, and the general public to settle disputes.

Garrison took a year's leave of absence from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1934 to serve as chairman of the National Labor Relations Board.

Eugene Grace of Bethlehem Steel, Tom Girdler of Republic and spokesmen for Inland Steel, represented the mills; for the workers, John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, John Owens, and other S. W. O. C. leaders.

The idea current in the minds of the public up to this time had been that the question of collective bargaining was agreed to. It was only a question of whether this agreement should be signed or not signed. But it soon developed that Tom Girdler had no intention of bargaining. The law of the land meant nothing to him.

While the mediators strove for some way to bring over the steel masters, Girdler pounded the table with,

"God damn it, the answer is no!" to all suggestions.

When the Mediation Board was convened, Sheriff Elser was deputizing a hundred men, preparing to support the back-to-work



movement. This move was checked by the peace move. Both the Sheriff and Mayor Lionel Evans agreed on the status quo pending peace negotiations. But the status quo meant nothing to the mills. Roy Thomas as spokesman for the Independents demanded the mills be opened, mediation or no mediation.

On June 19 came the Youngstown killings.

Make a picture of the picket line on that day. It is Women's Day in Youngstown, the first Women's Day workers here have known. Women with paper bands on their arms reading "Women's Brigade." These are solid-looking, older women. A young mother with a four-months-old baby in her arms. Maybe thirty women in front of the Republic gate at five o'clock, and by half past eight they are tired, so a few women are sitting on boxes that are a few inches on company property.

Here the picket-heckler, Captain Richmond, swings into action. He is always at the pickets, trying to provoke them. The police tell the women to move off company ground. As they start, the cops hustle them with: "Get along, get going!" Someone says: "We're moving as fast as we can." Someone says: "We've got a right to be here."

"I'll show you how to move along," says Richmond. At that he fires a gun three times in the air. A signal. Police fire tear gas point-blank at the woman with the baby in her arms, at the others with children by the hand.

You don't bring little children where you expect trouble.

Men are gathering across the street for a meeting. They start toward the police, but Bob Burke, Republic organizer and former Columbia student, gets the men to the meeting place behind Bavasky's Café. He tries to keep them calm.

But there's a shot and a cry for help. The men stream out to defend the women. Sheriff Ralph Elser sends out carload after carload of deputies. Hundreds of people are gassed, but the strikers don't break. Two hundred grenades are fired before nine o'clock.

"The men ate the gas," one woman tells me. The women eat it

too. At midnight more deputies roll out of the police station while the crowd boos.

"What's happened?" I ask Sheriff Elser.

"Here I was keeping the status quo, and they start this, and they're asking Tom Girdler to sign with murderers," raves the Sheriff. "They've asked for war. They'll get it! I'll deputize another hundred tonight." There is no end of deputies. Mayor Lionel Evans has deputies, besides the Sheriff's, and there is, too, a murderous cross fire from the mills. That is what killed George Bogavitch. An eye witness tells about his death this way:

"The shooting was going on and I was standing right in front with the bullets whizzing by my ears. The company police retreated back into their hole (the railway underpass leading to the mills). They were shooting the real stuff — bullets. Deputy sheriffs were throwing tear gas. I said: 'Boys, we're all crippled up. Let's retreat.' Just then I saw a fellow reaching down for his handkerchief. The gas was bad. A bullet hit him. I heard him gurgle. When we put him in the car, he was dead. We called a two-minute period of silence and then by twos we marched away."

The men killed in Youngstown were as needlessly murdered, the fifty wounded were as needlessly injured, as were the Chicago steel workers three weeks before. The press and that section of Congress that is so eloquent about the right to work, about a worker's right to remain alive, were quick to cry that the police shot in self-defense. Jim Eperjessi, the fifty-seven-year-old steel worker, was not shot in self-defense. He was fired on, pointblank, by deputies standing in a truck. I know because I was there. I stood beside the truck; I saw the flash and I heard the shots.

Jim Eperjessi was killed Saturday night, June 19. I did not see the first part of the trouble that night which had begun with the police gassing women and which ended with two dead and many wounded. I had been out in the country and when I got back, one man had already been killed, many were wounded, and hundreds gassed.

With Scotty O'Hara, I went down Poland Avenue toward Stop

Five, where the trouble had been. The street was dark. We walked through the drifting remnants of a cloud of tear gas, past a sparse line of pickets. A few dark figures were walking ahead of us. A truck load of deputies passed, and stopped a little beyond us. Suddenly, without the slightest provocation, the deputies opened fire on the workers. Two men ran toward us and dropped at our feet. Scotty O'Hara also sprawled on the ground, and I thought he had done so to get out of the way of the bullets. I had better do the same thing, I thought, and the next I knew, I was lying on the ground myself near one man who was groaning and another who lay motionless.

An hour and a half later, when I came from the hospital where my wound had been sewed up, the wounded were still arriving. A motionless woman lay on a stretcher in the hospital lobby. Two more women with wounded legs sat awaiting treatment. Outside a little boy of twelve was being helped from a car. Other wounded men were coming to the hospital. The deputies had been busy.

Monday night, June 21, the officials of the Republic and Youngstown companies announced that the mills would open next day. They did this in spite of the gassing and shooting of Saturday, and in spite of the fact that the specially appointed Federal Mediation Board was sitting and that both Mediator Charles Taft and Secretary of Labor Perkins had asked that the status quo be maintained. The air was heavy with approaching disaster. Every striker felt there would be a massacre.

The strikers sent their famous telegram to the President which read:

In the name of God and the overwhelming majority of the steel workers of Youngstown, who together with their families represent a majority of the population of this city, we urge you to immediately intervene in this critical hour and avoid a calamity and disaster that Ohio may remember for decades to come.

We can prove to your satisfaction that an overwhelming majority of employees of all three plants are members of the

CIO and are determined to stay out on strike until both companies sign an agreement.

Any attempt to open gates will automatically bring terrific violence and bloodshed.

Many private citizens sent telegrams of similar import. Ministers offered prayers that bloodshed might be averted. Knots of people gathered on street corners and quarreled over the issues involved: the right of the workers to work, against the right of the workers to live.

During the day, tenseness had grown steadily. Three thousand striking truck drivers had joined the steel workers. The city was tied up. Ice, bread, and milk were the only things that moved. Truck drivers had every approach to town picketed.

From their headquarters, instructions rang out constantly over the loud speaker: "Cruiser car No. 15, Cruiser 15, wanted on Briar Hill!" And off roared Cruiser 15 to stop an incoming truck.

Sympathizers were seeping into town — rubber workers from Akron, men from Canton, miners from Pennsylvania, steel workers from Sharon, Newcastle, Pittsburgh, Aliquippa. Thousands converged on Youngstown to help the steel workers. Rumors flew around that the United Mine Workers were on the march.

The workers were tired of these killings and massacres. They were streaming in to help. It was impossible to tell how many would come. Since the killings of Saturday night, June 19, and the revelations of the Chicago massacre, indignation had mounted through the valley, and Youngstown was the core of the struggle. Throughout the afternoon, meetings were being held from Warren to Struthers. The picket lines in Warren had defied the injunction, and where there had been ten pickets, there were now a hundred.

The workers knew this was the decisive battle, and when the day wore on, and no word came from the Governor, or from Cleveland where the Mediation Board sat, or from Washington, they prepared to resist the mill opening.

At midnight, word came that the Mediation Conference had temporarily broken down: Girdler had only reiterated his position.

The anti-Administration forces had chosen their general wisely when they placed Girdler at the head of the anti-labor, anti-Administration forces. All day the whole city waited for word from Governor Davey, and no word came. Youngstown Sheet and Tube made arrangements for the reporters to have two rooms overlooking Shop 14 — a front view of the massacre, in their office building. Catastrophe seemed inevitable when, at the eleventh hour, Governor Davey and the President acted.

When the unexpected word came, after midnight, the workers were dazed. They could not at once change their attitude from war to peace. The strikers were again massed in front of the mill gates, prepared for an all-night vigil. Among them were many who had been hurt the night before, by tear gas or bullets, but they were back on the picket line, prepared to face whatever was ahead of them in the struggle for their jobs.

At picket headquarters there was a busy scene. News came in by telephone and by messenger from other points throughout the area. Then suddenly word came that there would be no battle after all. The mills would not seek to reopen next morning. The troops were coming.

Smiley Shatoc stood before the dark crowd near Shop 14 and told them the news. He said: "Folks, everybody now he can go home quiet."

"Hey, we want to wait and see the troops come in," someone shouted.

"Sure, I know you want to see 'em, but better everybody she go to bed. Captain of police, he came and ask real nice — everybody he get off picket line, right now. Go home."

The tense crowd looked up at Smiley and the other organizers whose job it was to disperse the huge picket lines. These men and women had been working themselves into battle pitch. They were expecting bullets and tear gas as the mills opened. They were willing to risk their lives, maybe give them, as two of their fellow workers already had done. Now suddenly there was peace. It was three in the morning, and Smiley was disbanding them.



The President had spoken. The mills were not to open. The National Guard was coming in, not as strikebreakers, but to maintain the status quo. The workers at first could hardly understand it.

But as the workers from other towns streamed in there were arrests all through the night. Rose Stein, correspondent for *The Nation*, was arrested at 4 a.m. while driving in with friends, and was thrown into a cell with a demented woman. Scotty O'Hara, S. W. O. C. organizer, received a phone call from General Light that a large "force of armed men" was near Unionville. On investigation "the arsenal" of the "armed force" proved to be a few shot-guns and some clubs.

By morning, the troops were arriving on foot, a long, wavering line like a khaki-colored caterpillar. The workers, believing them to be their friends sent by a friendly Governor to save their lives, welcomed them — and again learned the old lesson which can never be emphasized enough, that state officials are not to be trusted by workers.

All through the night, and all the next day, strikers were being ferreted out in their homes and elsewhere, and arrested. While they were attending the funerals of those who had been killed, their houses and union headquarters were being searched for dynamite and arms. One of the union offices was raided and the records were confiscated. "A steel worker could be arrested for having a pen-knife or a toothpick," the strikers said. One man was actually put in jail for possessing a fork. In all, two hundred and twenty-five people were arrested and locked up, with no charges preferred against most of them. The leaders like Smiley Shatoc, Robert Burke, and John Stevenson, who had worked all night persuading the strikers to go home peacefully, were arrested "for inciting to riot."

The National Labor Relations Board had a staff of investigators in Youngstown, who were looking into the charges made by the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. The S. W. O. C. said that armed thugs and gunmen were used to interfere with peaceful picketing, and that this had been done through collusion of the Republic Company and the Mayor and Sheriff.



By evening two blows had fallen on the strikers. Their leaders were in jail and their civil liberties were taken from them. There was no way they could communicate with one another. Hundreds were arrested. Confusion and disorder and doubt were upon them.

Meantime at Warren, fifteen miles away, there was a situation as tense as that of Youngstown the day before. Here the troops at once showed the strikebreaking role they were to play throughout Ohio.

Warren from the first had been one of the hot spots of the strike. Company airplanes flew over the mills where a considerable force of the workers remained inside. The food fell with a terrific thud, often outside the plant. Over a gate post outside the Niles plant, smashed cans of beans were nailed, with the sign "Scabs' Breakfast." A great deal of fuss was made because the planes were sniped at by unknown persons. Such action was certainly an answer to a mill press agent's prayer.

Many of the tough characters and gunmen employed by Republic were said to be concentrated in the Warren mill in preparation for battle. The scabs made numerous sorties, attacking the picket lines with nuts, bolts, and gas pipes.

The circumference of the big Warren plants is about eight miles. All along this distance groups of men sat in the shade, played horse-shoes or camped on the railway. The strike dominated the community. All approaches to the mill were barred. Only if one were accompanied by an organizer could he pass the numerous picket camps.

In Warren an injunction against picketing had been clapped on the strikers by Judge Griffith. The picket lines had been reduced to a skeleton, but the strikers ignored the injunction. The troops were told to enforce it. General Connelly stated that the trouble was going to be over in a week and that "this is the beginning of the end."

The Sheriff of Trumbull County issued permits to the workers, the scabs, who remained in the mill. But the permits were given to cars, not individuals. When General Connelly was asked if there

was anything to prevent strikebreakers returning in those cars, he replied: "Nothing."

The workers in Trumbull County, furious at the sight of scabs coming out of the mill for the first time in four weeks, held a "Labor Holiday." Fourteen shops with seven thousand workers joined the Republic strikers. A parade of several thousand strike sympathizers was held and after the parade the workers lined the sidewalks. When the scab cars appeared, one car was overturned. A company of soldiers with fixed bayonets charged the strikers, and menaced them with tear gas. For a moment it looked as though a clash was inevitable, but the strike leaders maintained discipline and calmed the workers.

Warren had shown what the troops were there for. It was for strikebreaking. The strikers, who had already had two crushing blows, now saw the mediation efforts fail, and with the failure the Governor used the troops to open the Youngstown mills.

The news of the final breakdown of negotiations of the Mediation Board in Cleveland came late at night. All night long foremen telephoned the workers that the mills would open under the guard of troops. The radio, the newspapers, took up the cry. With the local leaders arrested, without literature, and with the radio denied the union, the only means of getting to the workers was by house-to-house visiting. Two more crushing blows had fallen on the workers.

The workers did not break. There was for weeks a strong resistant core in Youngstown and in many other strike centers, but many workers, confused without communication with their leaders, began seeping back to the mills.

Martial law, which had already been declared in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties, was extended to the Canton-Massillon area. Soon complaints poured in that the troops were being used as strikebreakers. Here is a vivid picture of how they attacked:

Canton Forum:

Canton, O., July 7, 1937

On July 2, 1937, about 3 or 4 o'clock, I was driving in my Nash Sedan on Carnahan Ave., at about 9th or 10th St. N. E.,

when a truck load of National Guards in full uniform run me down and I stopped sudden.

The National Guards came rushing to me and said that I was under arrest and I said, "Let's get this straight. What for?"

Then one of them said, "You done some typing for the CIO, didn't you? Well come up to Belden school and tell us some things, and we will let you go."

I said, "Kill me, if you are not too yellow, I would rather die a martyr fighting for Democracy under the flag of the Socialist party and the CIO than to ever turn traitor."

They asked me again to go with them to the Belden school, but I said, "No, I will never go to any concentration camp alive."

Then the leader of the gang who was dressed a little different from the rest of them — he hit me over the head with a club and knocked me unconscious for a little while. He kept on beating me over the shoulders and when I came to my senses the National Guards were tying a rope to my car and later towed it away with their National Guard truck. They kidnapped the two CIO escort guards who were in my car with me at the time. They were taken to the concentration camp at the Belden school and held prisoners till the next day.

They twisted my right arm till the ligaments were badly sprained. They hit me in the mouth and cut my lips and broke my plates of artificial teeth. Knocked them out on the ground.

They drug me out of my car by the feet and injured my back. One of the National Guards told the other to take my glasses off of me and he will smash my face. When he tried to take my glasses off, I bit his fingers. Then he let me have my glasses.

They stole my watch off my wrist and hid it in their pocket, the wrist-band was broken and fell on the ground. I reached in his pocket and got my watch.

They did not take me with them to their concentration camp, because the crowd of sympathizers was getting quite large by that time. Although all the while the crowds were held back from assisting me, they were driven back by the points of bayonets.

In my car was the following: One umbrella, \$3.00 worth of groceries, one gold pencil, one pocketbook containing \$62.00 in cash and a bus check, and some signs as follows:

OUR SCHOOLS ARE FOR OUR CHILDREN, AND  
NOT FOR THE NATIONAL GUARDS.

THE NATIONAL GUARDS ARE A DISGRACE TO  
OUR CITY.

NATIONAL GUARDS CUT OUR CHILDREN UP  
WITH BAYONETS.

NATIONAL GUARDS DRIVE OUR PEOPLE OFF  
THE STREETS WITH BAYONETS.

The National Guard stole my car and kept it from Friday till Tuesday night, and when we got it, it had been stripped of everything, including the \$62.00 which we have not got back yet.

Is this Fascist Italy or Germany, or is it America, where we are supposed to have Democracy?

CIO officials took me to the hospital where I was asked to remain, pending the outcome of the injuries. The Doctor said a concussion of the brain could develop from the head injury.

I refused to stay in the hospital, but I returned to my home, where in the night a terrible nervous condition developed, and another Doctor was called to my home. Am still under the care of this Doctor.

(Signed) Mrs. Fred King  
1723 Virginia Pl. N. E.  
Canton, Ohio.

Meantime Girdler had departed for the Post Office hearing. The part that the Post Office hearing played in the steel strike is most important. Big business should give everlasting praise to the lawyers

of Little Steel, who first discovered that three words were lacking in the Wagner Act, and who again made a test case of the mails by mailing four packages of food to the scabs in Warren who were being fed by airplane.

The post office of Warren, a small town, had decided it was not geared to feed several hundred men by parcel post, nor was it a strikebreaking agency anyway.

"That clever little stunt," said Raymond Clapper, the famous Washington columnist, "has kicked up enough dust to obscure the whole issue. It has put Postmaster General Farley on the spot by forcing him to prevent the postal service from being used as a strike-breaking medium. It has set Republicans in Congress off in lathering cry that 'the mail must go through,' and has, as was doubtless intended, caused almost everyone to forget about the real controversy. . . .

"Our form of government rests upon the assumption that important members of the community will have some respect for the general welfare and will try to reconcile their own interests in some workable adjustment to that general welfare.

"Girdler and his colleagues don't seem to give a damn about anybody else. They won't sign an agreement with organized labor. Thus sabotaging all collective-bargaining effort, they precipitate bloody warfare which is causing destruction of life and property and is demoralizing whole communities. . . ."

The Post Office hearing was the turning point of the strike. Here indeed the opposition could hurl a blow at the Administration. The murder of workers, the evasion and open defiance of federal law were lost sight of. The sanctity of the mails had been violated! Tom Girdler used the Senate Post Office Committee as a sounding board to proclaim that the C. I. O. was irresponsible, a statement that every reactionary employer heard with joy. The political winds that blew cold around the Administration over the Post Office incident may well have contributed to the President's inaction. The steel strike was not lost on the picket line but in Washington, Columbus, and Cleveland.

## INDIANA HARBOR

THE STEEL WORKERS, themselves, showed unvarying courage. Strike leadership differed in the various towns. From the point of view of a strike which employs modern techniques and strategies, the strike of Indiana Harbor outstripped all others. The Chicago section was led by Van A. Bittner. The second in command was Nicholas Fontecchio, a notable orator of great fire and warmth.

What stands out, however, is that the Indiana Harbor strike was led by leaders in the steel industry. In other words, steel workers conducted the most successful front in the strike against Little Steel. Here a partial victory was obtained, a partial capitulation by Inland Steel, which suggests, although not conclusively, that had it been possible to apply similar strategies and methods to the Mahoning Valley, the back-to-work movement would never have gathered such momentum.

In one case, Governor Clifford Townsend devoted himself to the cause of bringing about a peaceful outcome without bloodshed, but in Ohio it is certain that Governor Davey, long-time friend of John Owens, the strike leader, did not do all he could to avoid trouble.

In Indiana Harbor, steel mills and the workers constituted the town. It was a town where it was far easier to gain the good will of the small shopkeepers and the other citizens. It was a town where it was more apparent that their interests lay with those of the workers than in Youngstown. As soon as the strike was declared, the various committees, pickets, publicity, women's committee, commissary relief, recreation, were set up.

There was a central meeting place, like that of Pengally Hall in Flint where the workers could gather. But above everything else, the entire community was swept into the strike activities. Long before the strike occurred, the women had already formed fine auxiliaries. The women's auxiliaries both in Chicago and Indiana Harbor had antedated the strike. In the older steel towns, the old line United Mine Workers had frequently not encouraged women's organizations. In Youngstown, for instance, the women had organized quietly, almost surreptitiously.



In Indiana Harbor everybody took part in this lively strike. Every Saturday was Children's Day. Children painted their own banners. They learned strike songs. They paraded. They understood what it was about, as their home-printed banners, *Our Daddies Strike For Us!* proclaimed.

Women's Day on the picket line occurred twice a week, when the women became responsible for the picketing. The foreign language groups, too, each had a day, when the Italians or the Poles, or the Czechoslovaks, turned out en masse to do the picketing. The Mexicans were especially active and formed the backbone of the strike.

The picketing was well organized. There was a captain and a sub-captain for every twenty men, and the leaders boasted that they could bring out five thousand pickets within a few minutes' notice.

With the whole working community involved in strike activities, with the townspeople canvassed and their sympathy gained, the regulation back-to-work movement never came to much. But this lively and well conducted strike might also have been crushed had the Governor listened to the demands of the mill people and sent in the troops, as he was asked. Instead, he insisted on arbitration and finally, when the agreement with Inland Steel was reached, the rejoicing almost equalled that of Flint.

## XIV. The Back-to-Work Movement

### HOW TO BREAK A STRIKE

THE "back-to-work" movement is a strikebreaking proposition. Supposedly it is concerned with the right to work and is designed to protect men who don't want to join the union and are not in sympathy with the strike. In practice, however, the movement usually begins with a company union or its lineal descendant, a so-called independent union. Sometimes it is started by a group of businessmen working hand in glove with company officials. Occasionally labor spies begin it.

There is a double aim in this movement. One is to divide the workers and give the impression that two groups of workers are disputing, whether to work, or to strike, but its ulterior motive is to give the impression to the general public that the strikers are only a small group preventing American workers from their God-given "right-to-work."

The "right-to-work" makes a very fine talking point. The slogan of the "right-to-work" helps shape public opinion against the strikers, for strikes are fought not only on the picket line. They are also fought in the offices of big advertising agencies, and from them, on through the newspapers and over the radio. Pulpits and the halls of Congress were used as sounding boards to preach the doctrine of the "right-to-work." Any person who has had experience in labor unions knows how phony this "right-to-work" clamor is. It was the "back-to-work" movement which got the troops to Youngstown, the troops that were afterward used in every city in Ohio for strikebreaking purposes.

The "back-to-work" movement is as old as the open shop.

There is nothing new in this way of undermining the workers. Back in 1919 the investigation of the Interchurch World Movement stated:

As a fighting proposition the strike was broken by the successful establishment of, first, the theory of "resuming production," and, second, the fact of it.<sup>a</sup>

The concerns analyzed are a higher type than the old fashioned "Pinks." The modern concerns show more brains. They realize that up-to-date war relies heavily on propaganda. Their "operatives" or "representatives" (spies) are trained propagandists and are so offered for hire. For the propaganda the new concerns take their ideas — or at least their patter — from modern employment managers, from civic federations, from the spokesmen of the "open shop." Their preachments contain texts on optimistic "getting together" and "getting on" and "thrift" and "self-made success."<sup>b</sup>

An interesting detail in this new strikebreaking technique, whose ultimate object is the killing of all unionism, was given by Elmer T. Cunningham, President of the R.C.A. He testified before the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee about the strike which took place in Camden, New Jersey, and its "back-to-work" movement.

He stated: "Yes sir, as I previously stated, both Sherwood and Williams stated that the old method of using strikebreakers and violence and things of that kind to win or combat a strike were things of the past; that the way to win a strike was to organize community sentiment; that they had been very successful in handling plans of that sort. They showed me enrollment slips — I cannot recall the exact title, but it is something like — 'Citizens' Welfare Committee' of such and such a city. They showed me a large full-page ad, I believe from an Akron newspaper, in connection with a strike. They said they handled that. They sent men from

<sup>a</sup> *Report on the Steel Strike of 1919*, Harcourt, Brace, N. Y., 1920, p. 177.

<sup>b</sup> *Public Opinion and the Steel Strike*, Harcourt, Brace, N. Y., 1921, p. 5.

door to door to get citizens to sign these membership slips, and if possible, to get them to contribute to advertisements which would be run over the name of the so-called 'Citizens Welfare' organization, saying good things about the company and endeavoring in that way to promote a friendly public attitude to support the company. The details were a little more than that, but in substance, that was the plan."

A similar movement was used against the woodworkers of the Northwest in the strike of 1935 which was under the leadership of the Sawmill and Timber Workers Union. It was used again in the textile strike of 1934, in Hopewell, Virginia, where cards were circulated by the management stating that the undersigned were resigning from the Textile Workers of America. The Anderson, Indiana, "back-to-work" movement during the auto strike, and those of other communities have already been discussed. There is no end of examples which can be cited.

In the use of the "back-to-work" movement, the Remington Rand strikes have formed the classic example. It might be said that with the Mohawk Valley Formula, the "back-to-work" movement emerged from an instinctive movement, to the number one place in a conscious strikebreaking technique.

In Youngstown the strike was not three days old before a delegation waited on Mayor Lionel Evans asking for the mills to be opened.

When the Federal Mediations Board was sitting, Roy Thomas stated that "the move for Federal mediation will have no effect on the proposed back-to-work movement.

"We want work, and what is done or is not done as a result of the mediation means nothing to us as far as that goes." <sup>a</sup>

A peaceful arbitration would naturally be the worker's desire. This group showed how it was playing the company's game by its untimely demand of opening the mills. It was a challenge to peaceful settlement.

Roy Thomas, leader of the back-to-work movement here

<sup>a</sup> *The Cleveland Press.*

(Youngstown), said the Sheet and Tube has offered to accept the following:

Grant all workers, whether union or non-union, a choice of regular annual vacations, ranging from one to two weeks, or the equivalent in cash.

Pay all men who enter the plants tomorrow time and one-half on a twelve-hour shift.

Continue insurance on all its 15,000 employees in the Youngstown area throughout June by paying all premiums usually deducted from pay checks.

Waive physical examinations. This means thousands of older employees who might be disqualified by failure to meet physical requirements of employment, will not need to have such examination.

Mr. Thomas, who was nominally acting for workers anxious to return to work, has been able to announce the terms offered by employers. His connection with the Youngstown Sheet and Tube is obvious.<sup>a</sup>

Nowhere was this method used to better advantage or in more dramatic fashion during the steel strike than in Monroe, Michigan. This tidy little Michigan town had a Republic plant employing thirteen hundred and fifty people. When the strike was called, the plant closed without disorder or untoward incidents of any kind. Everything was quiet. None of the workers expected trouble.

It was then that Mayor Daniel Knaggs, together with businessmen working in conjunction with the mills, formed a steel workers' association to forward a "back-to-work" movement. The Mohawk Valley Formula was punctually followed, with the slight variation that the Mayor then took a phony vote in which the C. I. O. did not participate.

Evidence was accumulated by the union that even signatures were faked. Next, Chief of Police Jesse Fisher swore in a small army of deputies and special police. And vigilantes were organized.

<sup>a</sup> *The Cleveland Press.*

American Legionnaires took a leading part. Seventy-five Republic workers, said to be mostly supervisors, were deputized and paid time and a half for their time.

The picket line stood on one side across the road leading to the plant, the deputies and vigilante crowd were opposite them. The Governor was in communication with the Mayor urging that the opening of the plants be deferred. There are two details which stand out in the Monroe story, and which are significant to the general public. Two cars were drawn up on one side of the road, apparently occupied by onlookers. Observers saw someone from the car throw a brick into the line of deputies and at the same time a tear gas bomb at the strikers.

A melee resulted. Playing a leading part with the vigilantes was Mr. H. A. Alexander of the American Munitions Company of Chicago, which furnishes tear gas and ammunition to industrial plants.

The hearings of the La Follette Committee have shown over and over again that agents of munitions companies take active part in stimulating industrial trouble for the purpose of selling their goods. So in the Michigan town of Monroe there seem to have been present all the different elements for artificially provoking disaster.

The fake "back-to-work" movement no doubt was aggravated by the fact that this isolated Republic plant was not as strongly organized as those around the industrial centers. This is comparable with the situation in Anderson in the automobile strike. Where we find union organization weakest, it is easiest to attack with mob violence, easiest to stimulate "back-to-work" movements, easiest to stir up the credulous support of middle-class people.

In Massillon the "back-to-work" movement provided by the vigilante Law and Order League reached new heights of violence.

Here is an eye-witness account of what happened in Massillon:

On Sunday night, as was customary once or twice a week, a crowd of several hundred were gathered around the headquarters [of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee]; an orchestra made up of a bass viol, a violin and mandolin, sur-



rounded by children dancing in the street, was the center of attention. . . . A car drove up and parked opposite the headquarters, its headlights bringing into focus a group of armed police approaching down the street. A shouted order demanding that the lights be turned off attracted the attention of the crowd. . . . "Douse those lights or we'll fill 'em full of lead!" Before the driver of the car had a chance to comply, a volley of shots riddled the car, followed by the discharge of tear gas bombs, by volley after volley of gunfire and gas, directed at the cars and at the crowd, now wildly scattering for safety, and at the union headquarters where many sought refuge. With intervals of quiet, the police continued to send volleys of shots into the headquarters for an hour. A man stepped from the door during one of the intervals, thinking the shooting was over — he was shot in the leg without a word of warning by a deputy sheriff in the group of twenty which had arrived from Canton as reinforcements.<sup>a</sup>

Exactly what happened in Massillon was brought out in the hearings of the National Labor Relations Board. Chief of Police Switter was approached by Carl Meyers, district manager for Republic in the Canton-Massillon district. This is Chief Switter's testimony before the N. L. R. B.:

"Meyers wanted to know what the hell was going on over there letting those hoodlums run the town. He wanted to know why we hadn't done like the Chicago police had done. They knew how to handle a situation, he said. He told me if the mills closed down Massillon would be nothing but a junction point, with no need for a mayor or a chief of police or any other city officials."

Through the long pages of the hearing, one may trace the manner in which the Law and Order League was formed, composed of businessmen, how it urged Switter to swear in extra policemen for strike duty, and how it offered to pay for the equipment.

Two companies of National Guards had been quartered in the Republic plant. General Marlin, in command, urged the police

<sup>a</sup> *The New Republic*.

chief to accept this offer, while a retired army officer, Harry Curley, offered to help in organizing a large police force which was to be partly composed of "loyal" company employees.

Throughout the pages of the testimony, Switter shows how he held out. He pointed out that the strikers had made no trouble, that he had no need of a larger police force, that everything had been quiet, and that anyway, it was not his business to break strikes.

He explained how the Law and Order League "climbed all over the Mayor," and how General Marlin wanted to know why he wasn't "showing some signs of life." And when he said he was trying to select neutral people for the new police force, General Marlin said, "This is no time to be neutral." So the Police Chief finally capitulated. He was anxious to get new equipment, the mills and the businessmen would pay for it and the city of Massillon would not. Forty policemen were sworn in and were picked out by Curley from a list furnished by Republic Steel.

On July 11th, Switter drove out of town. He had been working night and day, he testified, trying to keep order, and he was tired and wanted a little rest. No sooner was he out of sight, than the attack was made on the defenseless Republic steel strikers.

Spread out in the public records of the National Labor Relations Board is a picture showing just how businessmen, the mills, and the National Guard combined to break a workers' strike by terror. After the shout, "All right, they asked for it, let 'em have it," after the gas grenades were hurled among the people, two were dead and fifteen were wounded. Killed and injured among the assailants — none.

But more shameful, almost, than the killings, was what followed. How many houses were raided, how many people were questioned as to whether they were strikers or not, how many people were dragged from their beds and arrested! People who said they were union members, and many who said they were not, were herded into the National Guard trucks and sent to the Massillon jail or the Canton workhouse. That night of terror, of dragging people from their houses, is one of the high points of violence in the strike.

## XV. Vigilantes

AS WAS EXPECTED, the National Labor Relations Board has justified the suspicion of the S. W. O. C. that the steel company was financing the Citizens National Committee, which made its bow to the nation July 15, 1937, during the strike against Little Steel. Though it was not paid to defray expenses of the Citizens Committee directly, but for deputies' salaries, Sydney D. Evans, the plant management representative of Bethlehem Steel, turned over the sum of \$30,000 or more to Daniel J. Shields, Mayor of Johnstown. The Committee received its funds mainly from industrialists throughout the country, the money being raised by a high-powered promotion man from New York, John Price Jones.

It was in Johnstown that the vigilante Citizens Committees came to their full flower. Here was started a vigilante movement that hoped to become nationwide. Here, indeed, the whole force of the Citizens Committee came forth quite boldly and dropped the least pretense that theirs was anything but a vigilante outfit.

The strike in Johnstown revolved in its own orbit and but for the Citizens Committees had little effect on strikes elsewhere. On the eleventh of June, the fifteen thousand Cambria Steel employees of the big Bethlehem plants in Johnstown, went on a sympathy strike, upholding the strike of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen and Trainmen of the Conemaugh and Black Lick Railroad, a ten-mile line employing 570 men, owned by Republic Steel, and serving the Bethlehem plants at Johnstown and its outskirts.

It was what might be called an old-fashioned strike, and was run, like the organizational campaign, as a one-man affair by an

old-line U. M. W. A. organizer, David Watkins, a conscientious, courageous man whose health gave way under the strain and who was replaced by another veteran.

There was no central strike meeting place, no way of keeping the strikers together or in communication with each other. In Johnstown, as in Youngstown, there are several different workers' districts, and it is a long distance from the main entrance of the Cambria plant in the center of town to the entrance to the mills in the outlying districts. There was no strategy board, no strike literature. Not only was there no woman's organization, but no women attended the regular mass meetings, except the big mass meetings out-of-doors.

The picket lines were ragged and the pickets threw rocks at the scabs. The throwing of stones had given the police an excuse to fire at the strikers, wounding several of them and one seriously. This clash, which occurred early in the strike, was exaggerated by the local papers to provide an excuse for deputizing a large police force.

The strike had been in progress but a short time before the Mohawk Valley Formula was punctually carried out. Excited citizens, many of them looking like high school boys, were being given black hats, night sticks, and arms, and were being sent to patrol the residential quarter of town to arouse feelings of alarm in the non-striking population. Everything was being done to give the effect that a violent and dangerous situation existed which must be handled by force.

The numerous armed deputies were nothing in the world but a troublemaking crowd in no wise designed to keep the peace. Strikers were being railroaded to jail for any and all offenses or for nothing at all — ninety days or one hundred dollars.

The phony dynamite charges which have become routine as a means of discrediting the strikers were not wanting. An ex-reformatory inmate — a member of neither union — was arrested for throwing three sticks of dynamite on the tracks of the Conemaugh and Black Lick Railroad. Layton, the prisoner, named two railroad

workers, Calvin Updyke and George Owens, as having put him up to it. Most embarrassingly, these men turned out to be "loyal" workers of long standing and prominent in company union affairs.

Layton then tried to relieve this embarrassing situation by hastily naming a member of the strike committee as his accomplice! The dynamiting of the water main, later, was naturally suspected to come from the same company source, especially as the company had been warned by the force to guard this especial point and which, in spite of the warning, was left unprotected. This is an aged but telling device. No matter how phony, it sticks in the minds of the people.

A "back-to-work" movement was promptly started. Mayor Shields said he would open the mills. The miners threatened to march on Johnstown forty thousand strong. Governor Earle sent in the troops and forbade the opening of the mills. The march of the miners was called off. From all over the country came a cry about this interference with the "right to work." It is interesting to note that all those protests came from the people who said not a word when, during the depression, employers dismissed thousands of workers. Nor have these same upholders of man's sacred right to work, spoken a word against the cutting of the W. P. A.

The Citizens Committee, as it first appeared, was a local group, launched in an atmosphere of race prejudice and hatred. When Governor Earle declared martial law, Mayor Shields defied the Governor and the state troopers. Addressing a vigilante mass meeting on June 16, he said, "The time has come when we had better take things into our own hands." The mayor cooperated with the two newspapers in creating an atmosphere of panic.

His is one of those "local boy makes good" stories which star the political history of this country. A small saloonkeeper, he rose in the world to become operator of a gambling joint. He took up bootlegging and was convicted in 1927 for tax evasion and attempted bribery in connection with the prohibition amendment. With this splendid background for a political career, he became Mayor of Johnstown. His high moment came when Clare ("Blood must



run") Hoffman of Michigan called for "A man of the caliber of Dan Shields in the White House." Dr. Gustavus W. Dyer of Vanderbilt University, speaking at the same vigilante meeting, awarded him only the modest position of Governor of Pennsylvania.

The press, the pulpit, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and civic and religious groups were all stirred up to a froth of excited apprehension. The Reverend Ray Starr of the First Evangelical Church preached on the strike situation in the light of biblical prophecy. The world, he declared, was nearing its end. "In 1906," he went on, "there was deposited in the British Museum a book from Russia, containing the minutes of some secret society which set forth the plans for the overthrowing of all governments and the bringing in of a world ruler. It is not hard to see the action mentioned in this book now functioning through the C. I. O. with John L. Lewis as its American leader."

The book to which the Reverend Starr refers is, no doubt, that well-known phony, "The Protocols of Zion" turning up again. Started as a hoax, it was taken seriously in Czarist Russia and still is used as a bogey by Jew- and red-baiters not only in Johnstown, but the world over.

Viewed from the perspective of only a few months, it can be seen that the citizens of Johnstown worked themselves up into a tantrum of hysteria.

The Emergency Federation of Fraternal and Civic Organizations was formed. Its Chairman was Francis G. Martin, Vice-president and Cashier of the United States National Bank of Johnstown, President of the Chamber of Commerce, which is as good as saying that Bethlehem Steel chaired the Committee, because Bethlehem Steel runs all Johnstown, including the Chamber of Commerce. Nor did it try to hide its vigilante character. The local paper mentioned forthrightly, BUSINESS LEADERS TO FORM VIGILANTES HERE IF RIOTING CONTINUES, MEETING REVEALS. Three days after the beginning of the strike at a meeting in the Elks' Home, Sydney D. Evans spoke. He was to be the go-



between for the munificent gifts of Bethlehem Steel in support of the movement.

At first the Committee manufactured publicity of a homespun kind, tactless, and puffed up with violence. But this was soon changed. Around this time there was a conference in Pittsburgh between local business leaders and representatives of some of the country's leading industrialists, to discuss the current strike situation. Shortly after, there arrived in Johnstown a representative of Ketcham, McLeod and Grove, the advertising agency that handles the Weirton Steel account. There also arrived a native son, John Price Jones of the Thornley & Jones Advertising Agency.

The plot thickens when one learns that Mr. Thornley handles the Ford advertising account, specializes in the accounts of "patriotic" societies and is said to have exclaimed when told of the idea of the nationwide Citizens' Committees, "I know Edsel Ford will be interested in this great movement."

Under the skillful hands of these publicity men the little home-grown, violent, vigilante committee blossomed. A national organization of Citizens Committees, said to have been discussed in the Pittsburgh conference of the big shots, was now launched. An advertisement appeared in the papers, the work of a master hand. Gone were the threatening words of the self-styled vigilantes. They had nothing to do with vigilantes any more. This admirable piece of literature, entitled Common Sense, appeared in forty papers throughout the country, at the estimated cost of about \$65,000. Calling for a nationwide organization, the advertisement contained this sentence which was the very foundation of every other vigilante committee throughout the country, just as it was the core of "back-to-work" movements:

"Let us make two things perfectly clear at the outset. We are not arguing for or against the unions. We are not arguing for or against the steel company. We take our stand in defense of two fundamental American liberties — the right of local self-government and the right of every worker to pursue his occupation peaceably and within the law."

The Citizens Committee, financed, as we now know conclusively, by Little Steel, practically controlled Johnstown for the next couple of weeks. Their protests caused Governor Earle to lift martial law and leave only a few State motor police, under Captain William Clark, who was glad enough to play the game with Bethlehem Steel and its ready tool, the Citizens Committee.

On July 15, in response to the advertisement, there came together in Johnstown the representatives of the Law and Order Leagues, Chambers of Commerce, and a motley crowd of red-baiters who formed a national vigilante movement under the name of the Citizens National Committee.

Now, no one who wishes to understand what happened in Johnstown should, for a moment, forget the Mohawk Valley Formula.

Big business has now a vigilante committee of its own, composed often of innocent and well-meaning people who have been frightened into joining. How sincere these people are you can find out by asking any man in the street, or any girl in the store. You will find that a real alarm has been spread in the community. People have been led to feel that some mysterious, outside, subversive force has moved into their town, stirred up the workers and is going to ruin business. These innocent people form the front and give respectability to the vigilante, strikebreaking committees.

The same technique that was used in Johnstown was used throughout the Mahoning Valley and the whole area covered by Little Steel, where each town had its own committee which sent delegates to Johnstown.

When the national organization moved to New York it was not the success its sponsors had hoped for. Donald J. Kirkley, one of the five members on the Executive Board, promptly resigned. He was the editor of a paper which was converted into *The National Farm News*, published in Washington, D. C., and he received plenty of criticism among the farm groups for having taken part in a vigilante conference. His letter of resignation follows:

I present herewith my resignation from the Citizens National Committee and request that it be accepted immedi-

ately. It is with considerable regret that I have reached this decision, but I feel that it is the only honorable course open, since I cannot sincerely go along with the committee in the program and atmosphere in which it seems to be functioning.

My resignation is predicated upon the belief that:

1. Every indication points toward a narrow political partisanship instead of the original non-partisanship basis. I realize political reform cannot be adjusted overnight. But I believe the President should be given full credit for the good that he has accomplished. It is not necessary or pertinent that this committee attack the administration in order to further the principles which are supposed to govern it.

2. The committee appears to have become a "red-baiting" agency. While I am as much opposed to Communism as any member, "red-baiting" is not the American way to meet it.

3. The committee has failed to declare that it is not fascist or vigilante, and by its silences, countenances the declaration that it is.

4. The committee does not seem to give any indication of earnest desire to be of help to the worker in reaching a sane and fair solution of his troubles in the current eras of industrial strife.

5. The committee, instead of conservative liberalism, seems to be reactionary, and thus not in keeping with the general desires of the majority of our principles.

6. No constructive program has been put forward to accomplish the objectives of the committee in correcting the conditions about which it complains.

Feeling as I do that the above is correct, and knowing that I do not fit in such a picture, I present my resignation. I should like each member to know that I do not challenge his sincerity of viewpoint or good intentions as he sees matters.

There is a nationwide common denominator for the vigilantes in the Imperial Valley of California, those of northern Michigan, the Ku Klux Klan outfits in Florida that murdered Joseph Shoemaker

and Frank Norman (citrus fruit organizers), Henry Ford's Knights of Dearborn, the employers of the Tom Girdler type, and the various fascist organizations, each with its little Fuehrer. Naturally they have their affiliations with the more outspoken German-Fascist group, for they all are cut from one piece of cloth.

Here in this country, without knowing it, they repeat pages of history. Following the Hitler pattern, they strive, and with success, to enlist the middle-class people with them. And as you examine the backgrounds of the leaders you will come to the inescapable conclusion that gathered together in the vigilante camp are not only the enemies of labor, but the enemies of the New Deal.

Our industrialists do not look forward to a Mussolini or a Hitler. They are content with the state of society in which they can run little individual fascist kingdoms of their own, with their own private armies and their own deputized storm troops or Citizens Committees. Such a Fascism is safer for them and easier for them to control.

## XVI. Steel Takes Stock

MUCH INK has flowed over the question of whether the steel strike should have been called at all. Many criticisms, some of them just, have been leveled at the conduct of the strike. Certainly it has underscored a lesson which should never be lost sight of for a moment. This is: *Rely only on the strength of the workers*. However, the steel strike, with all its sound and fury, its police violence, its betrayals, its use of Congress, has beclouded the issue and obscured from public view the monumental achievement of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. It has accomplished more, for the workers in its eighteen months' existence, than has been accomplished in any eighteen years.

Let us list its impressive achievements, strengthened by the new contract signed with U. S. Steel, which indicates that the weight of J. P. Morgan is to be thrown on the side of collective bargaining in autos and steel. For this progressive stand Thomas Lamont and Owen D. Young are said to be responsible. The idea that steel and its allied industries could not be organized is shattered forever. Every company union has been cleaned from the industry. Fear and hopelessness have been driven from the hearts and minds of the steel and metal workers and are replaced by courage and hope for the future. An industrial union has been built which is international in scope. It has over 500,000 members in 1,080 lodges in every steel center in America. Over 445 wage agreements had been made by the middle of December, 1937, with many companies which embraced almost 800 individual mills, plants, and shops. The principle of pay for overtime work was brought to these industries. Employment in the basic steel industries has increased by 75,000 workers

through reducing the work hours from forty-eight to forty hours a week and requiring time and a half pay for all work over forty hours.

Wages have been raised 25 per cent over the wage scale of 1929. The average pay per day has been increased from \$3.75 to \$5.00 in the greater part of the industry. Average weekly wages are now \$32 in the basic steel industries compared to \$26 eighteen months ago. Approximately \$200,000,000 more in wage raises have gone to the steel workers this year than would have been the case without the S. W. O. C.

A measure of security through signed wage agreements and seniority provisions, and grievance machinery is now enjoyed by the steel workers. Improved working conditions have come through the adjustment of grievances in an orderly fashion. Not only have vacations with pay in the basic industries been extended from 100,000 workers in 1936 to 300,000 workers in 1937, but recognized holidays have been secured. Labor Day in 1937 was the first Labor Day officially recognized in the steel industry. These benefits, in one degree or another, have been extended to the nineteen metal fabricating industries which come under the jurisdiction of the S. W. O. C. Philip Murray, chairman of the S. W. O. C., could declare when he addressed the convention of December, 1937, the first ever held in the steel industry:

"In not one instance has any officer, national, sub-regional or lodge, ever authorized or fostered a strike in a mill under contract. Observe your contract and your union grows, violate it and your union dies."

This is a rough picture of the eighteen-month record of the organization with which Tom Girdler refused to sign on the shabby excuse that it was irresponsible.

Having counted these almost incredible gains, Philip Murray said, "I believe it is well to take inventory during this convention and realize our task is only begun. These accomplishments, with the attendant political liberty established in steel towns, *do not make a union, as you and I understand it.* They merely constitute the base



upon which we are now ready to construct the impregnable structure of an industrial union. From now on our task is one of consolidating our gains of the past eighteen months. We must put forth our best efforts to educate our membership to a full understanding of their collective obligations and responsibilities as members of a great industrial union. All possible aid and encouragement must be extended toward developing and training the future leadership of our Union."

For the organization has been built so rapidly in the eighteen months of the S. W. O. C.'s existence that there has not been sufficient opportunity for the development of leadership within its ranks. There has not been opportunity enough for the education of these new workers, and the leaders are amply aware of this. They also know that when an organization is handed to a group through a contract, without the workers having fought to obtain this organization, their feeling for it will be lukewarm. It is in such places as Gary, Indiana, where through the agreement with United States Steel the union was attained without effort, that union attendance is small and dues-paying slack. Aliquippa, the Jones & Laughlin stronghold of reaction, where in 1933 and 1934 the workers managed to achieve an organization of many thousands, sees on the contrary an enthusiastic membership. So the first task before the S. W. O. C. is the consolidation of its gains, the development of leadership in the steel ranks and the education of its membership.

When the steel workers met for their wage and policy convention in Pittsburgh, the S. W. O. C. had finished its first triumphant phase — 85 per cent of the steel industry was under contract. But now the steel industry, together with the rest of the country, was moving into a new depression, with corresponding unemployment. Again the S. W. O. C. pioneered in the union field in its detailed facing of the facts of unemployment which confronted it, and in proposing constructive measures to fight it.

It was a somewhat grim and hard-bitten audience that Philip Murray addressed. Four out of five of the delegates came to the convention straight from the heat of the mills. Half of them were

former company union men who had helped to bring the rank and file over to the C. I. O. The hall of the Islam Grotto with its Moorish designs, was blue with smoke and lined with great posters of John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, and of steel workers. From the balcony dangled an effigy marked "Tom Girdler." When John L. Lewis arrived the convention went crazy. For twenty minutes they shouted and paraded around the hall with banners reading, WELCOME TO OUR LEADER, with signs showing from what widely-spread parts of the land they had come. But they settled down to face the facts of unemployment.

One-fourth of the workers who came under the S. W. O. C. were idle. More than half the workers were on part time. The production index had dropped like a plummet from 85 per cent capacity to under 30 per cent and John L. Lewis and Philip Murray both pointed out that there was no indication of an upturn before spring. Not only that, but tremendous technological unemployment faced the industry. Next year a wholesale dismantlement of the old type mills would begin and they would be replaced with hot strip mills which can roll one-third of a mile of hot strip in a minute. When this new process is fully installed, 15,000 strip mill workers will be doing the work of 100,000 sheet, bar, heavy plate sheets, and black plate workers. In other words, of the 125,000 normally employed in sheet, bar, etc., only 25,000 will remain. This program will be completed in three years.

These facts were spread out before the grimly attentive steel workers. Such an analysis, such a facing of a situation of unemployment, is an innovation in trade unionism. It is more of an innovation that there should be a program with which to combat the rising tide of unemployment.

"A great national industrial union like ours cannot stand by and watch every fourth member thrown into idleness," cried Philip Murray. "Each worker has a right to a job and must be guaranteed security of employment."

The S. W. O. C. proposes a five-billion-dollar authorization to the United States housing authority to lend money to local housing

authorities to construct low-cost houses, a sum estimated adequate to build a million houses, or about a third of those which the country needs, during the next three years, to be financed from the surplus of the Social Security Tax.

The four-point legislative program agreed on at the October Conference of the C. I. O. in Atlantic City was reiterated here before the S. W. O. C. Convention:

1. All business enterprises in interstate commerce to be licensed, and the license to retain a code protecting the rights of labor.
2. Federal wage and hour legislation of minimum hours and maximum wages.
3. Appropriation of sufficient funds to continue W. P. A. and P. W. A. for the purpose of assuring every worker a job.
4. Extension of Social Security legislation.

The convention voted to leave the matter of renewal of contracts which expire February 28, 1938, entirely in the hands of the executive officers of the Scale Committee.

To carry out the housing program a Housing Committee and an Unemployment Committee will be set up in each S. W. O. C. lodge. And each S. W. O. C. lodge will automatically become the center for unemployment. As John L. Lewis said, "Labor in America cannot be turned out to starve merely because industry desires to dispense with its services. Labor cannot be turned out to starve merely because some chemist, or scientist, or technician, has evolved some new device or invention to displace labor."

"This question of increased unemployment is again ravaging the nation with a terrible impact. The question of the right to work, if our industrial friends prefer to call it that; the right to work, the right to live like reasonable men should live today, is one of the major questions that face us today. There will be no logical solution of that problem until labor organizes and compels a solution of that problem."

## XVII. The Textile Drive

NEXT IN IMPORTANCE to the auto and steel campaigns was the T. W. O. C. Like most of the campaigns to be discussed, it made its greatest gains during and after the steel strike which was supposed to stop the C. I. O.'s activities. An agreement was made with the United Textile Workers similar to that made between the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and the United Mine Workers.

The T. W. O. C. has been Sidney Hillman's child as much as the Steel Workers Organizing Committee has been that of John L. Lewis. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers contributed \$500,000 to it as the United Mine Workers did to the S. W. O. C., and the heads of the T. W. O. C. are largely Amalgamated Clothing workers just as the old U. M. W. A. organizers have captained the steel town campaigns. On the Textile Committee is John Brophy. The Secretary-Treasurer is Thomas P. Kennedy, but the plan of the campaign and its execution are Sidney Hillman's. Francis A. Gorman, President of the U. T. W., has lent his experience to the drive.

The attempts to organize the textile workers were many. The I. W. W., the Socialists, Communists, and the A. F. of L. all tried and none succeeded. To each attempt the workers responded, only to lose their union in the end, often amid bloodshed. Passaic, Paterson, Lawrence, Gastonia, Marion, Honea Path recall great industrial conflicts fought in vain. Now it looks as if the T. W. O. C. is going to succeed where all others have failed.

The textile industry is one of the most confused and competition-ridden industries in the country. No other has such fascist kingdoms, such company-controlled towns. It is an industry of low

wages and child labor, employing as it does, more than 100,000 children between ten and seventeen. Thirty-nine per cent of its workers are women and in many states, where laws do not prevent it, the night shift claims them.

Blanketed under the name of textiles there are really five industries, all of which are in fierce competition. So when one thinks of textiles, one has to think of an industry split up into cotton, wool, silk, synthetic fabrics, and knit goods. There are also the subdivisions of the industry — thread, yarns, carpet, etc.

These various branches of the industry are perpetually in conflict. They are at the mercy of every passing fashion. When skirts are short and style decrees silk, woolens suffer. Rayon has almost been the death of silk manufacturers. A vogue for cotton dresses can cut into both silk and wool and light knit goods. The various branches of the industries are split up into comparatively small units. Thirty-four hundred companies own 5,870 mills.

In wartime and after, a vast expansion of the cotton mills in the South took place, financed mostly by northern capital. In 1927, alone, sixty million northern dollars were invested in the southern mills, lured there by the advertisements in trade journals of "the 100 per cent white, docile, American labor," who were content with much lower wages than the northern workers.

This migration of capital almost ruined a number of New England textile centers and it has long been Sidney Hillman's belief that you cannot have a sound industry which is cut in two. The equalizing of the northern and southern wage scale is one of his objectives.

From the first a constructive program was placed before the manufacturers. Sidney Hillman pointed out that it would be impossible to pay proper wages unless some agreement could be reached, some point of contact established where the cutthroat competition could be, in some way, regulated. "A floor of a minimum wage for all employees throughout the industry and a shorter work day" were the objectives. He went into the campaign preparing for a long drive, yet believing in his ultimate success, even the



organizing of the South, because: "The employers will see it's to the advantage of the South." And with a clear idea of what problems confronted the employers as well as those which confronted the workers, his problem was not to restrict production, but to prevent overloading, to regulate the workers' hours, realizing that fatigue is the enemy of production. For this reason, part of the original plan was that of eliminating the third shift and providing vacations with pay.

Negotiations in so contradictory an industry had to be based on careful research. Solomon Barkin, formerly economist for the Department of Commerce, heads the research department. The financial situation of every mill, its indebtedness, its competitors, and its standing were put on record. The difficulties arising from the anarchical state of the industry were analyzed. Much information was gathered about each local situation. The sympathy or opposition of church groups, civic groups, Y. M. C. A.'s, etc., was noted. The characteristics of sheriffs, mayors, public officials, congressmen were recorded.

Never was a great organizational drive prepared with more care than that of the T. W. O. C. Never have so great a number of workers in an open shop industry been organized with less fuss and less publicity.

The progress of the T. W. O. C. has rested on education, on an organizational campaign complete throughout to the last detail, on negotiations, and on research. The strike has been considered as a last resort, to be avoided if possible.

Sidney Hillman has declared over and over again that if men's clothing could be organized, there was no reason why textiles couldn't be, for many of the same difficulties were present in both industries. Sidney Hillman has a prescience of the split second when an employer will make a bargain. He watches for this psychological moment. On this aptitude of his for negotiating, matured by thousands of successful jousts with the employers in the clothing industry, his success in textiles has rested. More than 400,000 of the 1,250,000 textile workers in this country have joined the T. W. O. C.



The union now has contracts covering 245,000 of its members and is negotiating contracts for 25,000 more. Six hundred agreements have been signed, representing twelve hundred different mills.

Rayon and synthetic yarns are already organized 90 per cent. The contract with the big Viscose Company employing 20,000 workers was the first signed by the union. The knit goods have a large organization. Carpets are organized. Nearly 85 per cent of the silk industry is under contract, with a \$14-a-week minimum wage and a forty-hour week. This includes both the throwing end as well as the weaving end of the industry. The N. L. R. B. elections of the American Woolen Company, with the overwhelming victory for the C. I. O., indicate that the woolen industry will soon be organized. Yarns and threads will both be organized, and now the great task that remains is in cotton.

To accomplish these results more than five hundred men and women organizers spread through the country. Eight regional offices were established. In the textile mills of the North, where many languages are spoken, foreign language organizers were employed. When the Ku Klux Klan threatened to ride again and drive out the "C. I. O. Communist foreign agitators," they found that there were no foreign agitators in the South, that all the one hundred and fifty organizers were people in good standing in their own communities, church members, and even quite a few ministers, under the leadership of Steve Nance, former President of the A. F. of L. of Georgia.

How the Textile Workers Organizing Committee functions is exemplified by the successful strike in the silk and silk-throwing industry in the fall of 1937. Of all the branches of the textile industry, silk is the most distressed. When the T. W. O. C. organizers went into some of the small towns, women worked a fifty-two-hour week at six and seven and eight dollars.

The strike was called on a national basis. Hillman's first act was to have a conference with the employers in which he tried to lay out some basis of agreement which would stop the cutthroat competition. The workers came out almost 100 per cent, all through

Paterson, Passaic, Scranton, Allentown, Wilkes-Barre and in the towns up the Hudson such as Amsterdam and Yonkers. The workers came out and stayed out. The long months of careful planning had borne fruit. Presently Father Haas was negotiating a settlement in Pennsylvania. A "back-to-work" movement was fostered by a few employers who belonged to the Girdler school, but not much came of it.

Without violence and scarcely noted in the newspapers, the strike of a whole industry came and went, leaving the workers 85 per cent under contract, and the employers agreeing under a constructive program. There is a minimum wage of \$14, and \$18 for weavers. The forty-hour week has been agreed upon. These are cold figures. It is very hard to imagine in terms of human life what these shorter hours, these higher wages mean to the thousands of workers, women, and young people employed in the textile industry. A new life is what it means.

With the same sense of the inevitable, the woolen industry is about to be organized. On May 1, 1937, John L. Lewis and Hillman opened the drive in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the home of the American Woolen Company and the scene of fiercely fought battles.

They arrived, observers recorded, with a new line of attack. They did not underscore *fight* like old line organizers. They spoke of opportunity. They stressed the point that workers could, under the N. L. R. B., hope to organize without harm to themselves.

"In the textile industry," said Lewis, "is the basis for the largest union in the world. Aid in creating it. Dream what it can do for you." The power of the workers. The air vibrates with that idea when Lewis talks. The workers responded.

What about cotton? What about the South? The outline of the T. W. O. C. strategy becomes apparent. It has been an encircling tactic. Organization has been achieved among all the other branches of the textile industry so that an end is in view, for it will not be more than a matter of months until they are almost completely organized.

In the South, particularly in those states where the T. W. O. C. is

active, hatred of the C. I. O. is specific and poisonous. *The New Liberation* (vital information for enlightened patriots), published in Asheville, N. C., used its complete July issue to attack the C. I. O. Its leading article asked: *Shall American Workingmen be Dupes of Moscow?* The second story told: *How we know the C. I. O. is a tool in the hands of Moscow.*

The vigilante and Ku Klux groups opposing the T. W. O. C. specifically, and the C. I. O. generally, are linked up with anti-Semitic propaganda.

With such opposition a long process of education was necessary in the south, to overcome the timidity of the workers; education, not only of the workers, but of the public. In mill towns little mimeographed papers began to appear. *Parade*, the organ of the southern textile workers was published. As each local was established, immediate attention was given to educational and recreational activities. In some places there were educational forums and workers' classes. Others got up their own ball teams or bands. There were mass celebrations. People began making up songs, and singing them.

From the Union Women's Club of Merrimack local, Huntsville, Alabama, came a sheaf of songs sung to old ballads. A song to the tune of *Birmingham Jail* tells the saga of John L. Lewis and William Green, beginning:

Of the C. I. O. we hear a lot,  
From what it is doing, it must be hot,  
Of the A. F. of L. and William Green  
We've heard very much, but nothing we've seen.

It was in the year of thirty-six  
Organized labor was in a heck of a fix.  
William had said, "I am for craft,"  
And this made John L. Lewis laugh.

They sing:

Put on your T. W. O. C. bonnet  
With the Union Label on it,  
And we don't care what the bosses say.

or:

Hear them shouting everywhere, C. I. — C. I. O.  
Did our bosses get a scare, C. I. — C. I. O.

So the march went onward into the South. It was temporarily almost checked by the depression. In the South there are a few great cotton concerns, such as Cannon in North Carolina, Riverside in Danville, Virginia, Bibb in Georgia, that have the position, roughly speaking, in the cotton industry that the American Woolen Company of Lawrence, Massachusetts, has in woolens. These have not signed up yet, but the encircling movement creeps on. The radio, the house-to-house canvass, the mass meetings, the talks before the community by well-known people, these continue. Organizers continue to emphasize that the object of the whole T. W. O. C. drive is to achieve its ends peacefully and that strikes will be used only as the last possible expedient.

Will it be possible to organize the rest of the industry as peacefully as the first third has been organized? No one knows. Many people believe that Hillman may parallel the steel drive again. They organized nearly half of the steel workers and then met a Girdler. It is certain that Hillman will avoid a conflict if it is possible. It is impossible to say when the industry will be organized or what difficulties may still lie in the way, but that it will be organized in a not-too-distant future seems inevitable.

When asked how long it would take to complete this drive, Sidney Hillman stated most convincingly, "My answer is — just one day longer than the last employer will fight us."

## XVIII. White Collar Workers

*Small fry are no longer small when they begin  
to organize. They take on purpose and power.*

*Heywood Broun*

THE FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE of the Insurance Agents Union was held in New York, December, 1937. This meeting was in a sense a more revolutionary development than the organization of steel and auto workers. That insurance agents from all over the country, from New England to California, should have begun a militant organization showed that a profound change in thinking was going on among the middle-class workers.

The very calling of such a conference has historic significance. Here, for the first time, was provided a parallel for the practical organization of the giant insurance companies. Through their investment of policyholders' funds these huge companies constitute a vast reservoir of financial capital. Though there are 382 insurance companies in America, ten major concerns hold over 70 per cent of all insurance assets. And nine of these giant firms are directly influenced by the house of Morgan, which shares control in some instances with the Rockefeller interests.

This meeting was an illustration of the fact that the white collar and professional people are joining the onward march of labor. While the number of factory workers reached its peak in 1919, the employment peak for white collar workers was not reached until ten years later. Now both groups are equally subject to layoffs and wage cuts and they are at last recognizing this crucial fact. Politically, and from the standpoint of a sound labor movement, this is nearly the most important development that the labor renaissance of the last years has produced. For it is through the unions' pene-

tration of the white collar and professional workers that the middle class will at last awaken to its place in history.

One of the most discouraging things about the labor movement in the past has been that this enormous group, composed of nearly a sixth of the workers of this country, looked at labor's efforts to organize with the same indifference with which the white Capetown dwellers regard the muffled drumming of the African in the bush.

The small-town dweller, the people engaged in small businesses, that army of people who are employed one year and who are in business for themselves the next, and all those who are steadily leaving the ranks of the employers to become themselves employed, have been in ignorance, not only of the labor movement, but of their own relation to the world in which they live. There are literally thousands of towns in the United States composed almost exclusively of working people of one kind or another; towns where scarcely a score of people make or spend over \$2,000 a year, who, fed as they are on information furnished by the manufacturers' associations, regard labor as something remote from them, an unruly group composed of people who make strikes, engage in riots, and whose leaders are mostly racketeers.

The ignorance of the middle class and the white collar worker is as dense in industrial towns. In Anderson, Indiana, during the General Motors strike, office girls by the score, firmly believing that the unionization of the auto workers would destroy business in Anderson, signed the cards furnished them by the Citizens Committee.

One of the most potent ways of dispelling this ignorance is through the organization of the white collar and professional people. But this organization to be successful must carry with it a large measure of education designed to show this class its true relation to the modern business and industrial scene. Through the C. I. O.'s progressive approach, the impetus given to it by militant young leaders, and guided by the judgment of mature minds long in the labor movement, education and organization are being carried on together.



The technician, the draftsman, the great army of workers in the financial districts, the great army of employed girls starting out to the office every morning, the teachers, the musicians, and all those engaged in the amusement trades have in the past considered themselves as belonging to the propertied class instead of regarding themselves as workers. The lag of thought behind reality is nowhere more clearly seen than among white collar workers who still act as though they were living in the days when in office or workshops the young clerk or apprentice was presently taken into the firm and had the opportunity of marrying the employer's daughter.

The largest white collar union, the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Station and Express Employees, though having a membership at its best of 135,000 workers, refused to have Negro members in its ranks. The same was true of government employee unions under the A. F. of L. They remained stagnant and inactive and in no wise saw their struggle as labor's struggle.

The failure of the amusement groups and the government employees to relate themselves to the struggle of labor was largely the fault of the A. F. of L. Its conception of labor was as narrow as that of the salaried worker. A distrust of "intellectuals" has always been characteristic of it. Since the earliest days of Gompers' rule the A. F. of L. never made any effort to penetrate the hostility or ignorance of the middle class.

Among the white collar people, organization even for the most exploited office help was feeble and ineffectual. In industrial disputes no attempt was made by the workers to organize the office staff who almost invariably sided with the management; and when the hotel workers formed unions, it was the women in the hotels' employ who could often be counted on to scab, and take the places of the waiters on strike.

Until the depression, the white collar workers sailed along unconscious of their place in the world; their clean hands and clean collars gave them the illusion of superiority. Actually the changing economic scene with its closed frontier, huge aggregations of capital

and steadily shrinking opportunities for small ownership, had completely altered the status of these workers. Unwittingly they became "salary slaves." The depression shattered the world in which they lived and revealed to them that they were as insecure as any man who has nothing to sell but the work of his two hands.

There is no record of all the thousands of middle-class young people who lost their houses, their furniture, their cars, and who subsisted on the charity of their families or public relief during the depression. In New York City alone it was estimated that 40 per cent of the women on relief had formerly held clerical jobs. In 1932 it was estimated that nearly 20 per cent of the nation's four million clerical workers were unemployed. Salaries fell. The average \$20 and \$22-a-week job now netted only \$15. Qualified chemists could be had for only \$14 a week. Four-fifths of the three million and a half professionals and technicians are salaried people. The toll that the depression took on their jobs was tremendous. Statistics for 1933 show 98 per cent of the architects unemployed, 85 per cent of the engineers and 65 per cent of the chemists. Many of these, finding employment only under the W. P. A., learned that their lot was even more precarious than that of the industrial workers. Then they readily entered the unions, seeking security through organization.

During the depression they swelled the relief rolls as surely as did the industrial workers or the small-pay stenographers. The depression was writing a lesson on the walls of history: that all workers are subject to the same economic laws; that the brain worker who has invested a small fortune in his training is no more insured against destitution than is the lowest paid typist or laborer.

Some of the professional and white collar people read the lesson and began forming unions after 1931, but it is necessary to remember that a vast number sought relief for their economic ills in crackpot panaceas. There is only a beginning, so far, in the organization of this important group of people who are the logical ones to interpret labor's new identity and purpose to the middle class.

For the moment professional people organize, their identification

with all of labor becomes apparent to them. What has happened to the Newspaper Guild is one of the most important developments that has occurred in recent years.

Under the fierce attack of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, after some hard-fought strikes, and after it had seen its members fired for union activity, the Guild membership learned rapidly.

The Guild's swift gain in numbers is remarkable, but not so remarkable as the span it has covered in its thinking. When it first started, the news writers didn't think of themselves as workers. They considered the organization as a sort of club. They had not analyzed their position. They did not realize that the average newspaperman throughout the country was receiving a smaller salary than the government-paid garbage man.

At their last convention under the leadership of Heywood Broun and Jonathan Eddy, they voted to join the C. I. O. and to include as eligible to the Guild all workers from circulation men to copy boys. Their stand was questioned by the opposition and a referendum was taken which overwhelmingly confirmed this action of the convention. William Green is attempting to form a rival Newspaper Guild, but up to now, not a member has joined it.

Another union which has come along rapidly is the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists, and Technicians. The first professional union to affiliate with the C. I. O., it grew rapidly. It included in its ranks unemployed members and workers employed on the professional projects of the W. P. A. and has been in the forefront of the line by which the old antipathy and ignorance of the middle class can at last be expelled.

The Teachers Union, which was formed in 1896, after a promising beginning lapsed into inaction. Since the depression it has had a new lease on life. Its membership has increased and it has shown its progressive trend by electing Jerome Davis president, and by formulating at its last convention strong resolutions for unity between the A. F. of L. and C. I. O. A referendum is to be taken on the question of joining the C. I. O.

In the W. P. A. and outside it many small professional unions have been formed. They have been about equally divided between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. They include social workers, dental laboratory technicians, nurses, librarians, research workers, pharmacists, etc.

Among the retail clerks and bookkeepers, stenographers, and office workers generally there has been a tremendous stir of union activity. The A. F. of L. had in both groups small unions whose membership failed to increase year after year. The Bookkeepers, Stenographers, and Accountants Union voted in May, 1937, at a special convention called for that purpose, to go into the C. I. O. Under the name of the United Office and Professional Workers of America, a coast-to-coast organizing campaign of office and professional employees was started under the guidance of their able young president, Lewis Merrill. A campaign was started among the thousands of hitherto unorganized financial workers. The campaign among the insurance workers has been mentioned. At the same time the A. F. of L. became active in organizing white collar groups in all industrial cities. The organization of retail clerks and office workers, of lunchroom girls and waitresses received an impetus wherever great industrial drives were in progress. It is yet too early to assemble any conclusive figures because the wave of organization among these new unions is only beginning and every new victory among the industrial workers has its repercussion among the salaried white collar workers. From the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic States these groups of workers are joining unions, demanding decent working conditions, higher pay, and better hours.

The retail clerks' organization was formerly one of the racketeering unions. In vain the rank and file membership protested to William Green. Individual unions started joining the C. I. O. They finally joined the United Retail Employees of America. In New York alone thousands have joined. Clarina Michaelson, organizer of Local No. 1250, has done an outstanding piece of work in that city, organizing Woolworth employees, Oppenheim, Collins'

and Hearn's employees, and many other of the girls who belong to the most underpaid and hard-worked group. The A. F. of L. has also been active recently among the retail clerks and waitresses, and chain store employees are being organized in a nationwide campaign.

The C. I. O. has formed unions in which to organize the 800,000 government employees. In a split-off from the old A. F. of L. American Federation of Government Employees, 3,200 formed the nucleus of the C. I. O. United Federal Workers of America under the leadership of Jacob Baker.

Government workers under the A. F. of L. were divided into eighteen unions. These workers' natural conservatism was in no wise lessened by the A. F. of L. The unions were unions in name only.

Under two broad groupings — the Federal Workers and the State, County and Municipal Workers — the C. I. O. hopes ultimately to form strong industrial unions of government employees. Such injustices as occurred in 1932 — when through economy measures men in the prime of life, in customs or immigration, coast guard, etc., were put on the retired list with small pensions — would never have occurred had there been a union to speak for them.

Both the A. F. of L.'s narrow, "vested interest" outlook and those earlier opportunities for advancement into ownership from white collar work are responsible for the present serious lag in thinking that stops a swifter organization in this field. Salaried workers are still reluctant to acknowledge their common interest with industrial workers and learn from organized labor new lessons in economic history. Nevertheless, the pressure of reality is steadily bringing these facts home to white collar employees.

The rapid progress of the white collar unions and their education of the middle-class people from whom they spring will be one of the greatest insurances that this country can have against fascist movements.

In estimating the importance of this movement we must remember that the middle class has been the recruiting ground of the fascist movement.



When the bottom dropped out of the economy of the middle class in Germany, its members did not join the ranks of the workers. Not understanding what had happened to them, they maintained the illusion of their superiority to the manual workers and became easy dupes of Hitler's propaganda. He was financed by the employers, just as we have seen elsewhere in this book that the little Fuehrers in America are financed by the Weirs and the Graces. Hitler derived his rank and file support from the economically ignorant middle class. How true it is that the middle class when in distress inclines toward adventurers can be seen by the fact that such adventurers as Huey Long, Gerald K. Smith, and Father Coughlin got their support from just such distressed people as those who supported Hitler in Germany.

Hunting a solution to their economic disarray, these groups readily swallowed the various eccentric schemes and plans offered to a gullible public. Our bewildered middle class has supported the Townsend Plan, share-the-wealth moves, social credit plans and the like, just as the frightened salaried classes in Germany turned to Hitler for relief from their economic misery. The pattern repeats itself.

Only by labor's telling its story plainly, by pointing out the democratic and practical aspects of its program, will these middle-class workers be brought to see where they belong in the economic picture, and transfer the weight of their influence from the side of the employer who has so assiduously courted them to the side of the worker with whom their interests dovetail.

And only when they do transfer their interests, only when they have ceased to be on the side of the management and the bosses, will they cease to be food for such fascist ventures as the Citizens Committees. Only when they realize that their economic salvation lies in organization, together with all salaried and industrial workers, will the importance of the labor movement be understood throughout the country and a true unity of all workers be achieved. Without the support of the middle class, the farmers, and white collar groups, the organized industrial worker cannot lead all labor finally to economic and political maturity.



## XIX. Agricultural and Cannery Workers

### TO THE WORKING FARMERS

*The Committee for Industrial Organization, through its affiliate, the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America, has now entered one of the most important areas of American industry. Agricultural workers are the most oppressed part of our population. Men, women and even very young children toil from dawn to dark at wages that are a disgrace to America. Their living conditions are appalling. And until C. I. O. entered this field, no real attempt has ever been made to help these millions of workers whose condition is one of the blackest blots on the nation's escutcheon.*

*The working farmers of America have a great stake in the C. I. O.'s crusade to raise the level of living of the working people of this country. No paradox in American life has been more shocking than the existence, on the one hand, of gigantic farm surpluses, while barely across the street millions of people have gone hungry for the want of these foods. Only when the industrial workers, steadily marching toward higher standards of living, can buy the farm products they need, will the farm problem be solved. The American worker and the American farmer have a common goal, and that goal is that every citizen of our country shall have the right and opportunity to earn a decent living. One of the salient tasks of the C. I. O. in organizing the rural wage earner is to cooperate with the working farmer in reaching this goal.*

*All of us, whether from farm or factory, must join to realize our common aim of higher standards and economic security for the people of our nation.*

*(signed) John L. Lewis, Chairman  
Committee for Industrial Organization*

ANOTHER of the most strategically placed of the unions which affiliated with the C. I. O. in the summer of 1937 is the Agricultural, Cannery and Packing House Workers. After four years of neglect by the A. F. of L. they, too, joined the C. I. O.

Donald Henderson, President of the International, defined their position as follows:

We occupy a very peculiar position. In a very real sense we are the laboring population in the countryside. We are the beginnings of the labor movement in agriculture. We are part of the labor movement.

At the same time, precisely because we are in agriculture, we are bound up with the fortunes, the hopes, and the fears of the millions of farmers. We are the link between the great industrial labor movement and the millions of toiling farmers in the United States.

What we do is going to affect, for good or ill, the fortunes and the future of the entire industrial labor movement, as well as the fortunes and the future of the millions of hard-working honest farmers in this country. No labor union has so strategic a position as we have. No section of the working class can contribute more to the future development of the labor movement than we. At the same time we are the spearhead of the labor movement to the farmers. . . .

Little was known about these workers until recently. The Department of Agriculture had few figures about them. The Department of Agriculture is for farmers, not for farm laborers. The Department of Labor classed them as belonging to agriculture and didn't bother about them. Only the Children's Bureau has some material about these unprotected people whom no one claimed. As they were unclaimed by labor or agriculture, they had no benefit of Federal labor legislation.

The N. R. A. did not apply to them. The A. A. A. actually legislated against them, for as the cotton and tobacco acreages shrank they were left homeless. The benefit of Social Security in Old Age

Pension and Unemployment Insurance was not for them. They were discriminated against in federal legislation; they were ignored in state legislation. No child labor laws, no limitation of hours, no minimum wage existed for these workers. In eight states there are laws permitting schools to close so children may harvest crops. The "strawberry" schools in Florida, for example, close at Christmas for three months so the children can bend their backs picking berries and then resume their studies in the hot summer months.

With the coming of the N. R. A. cannery workers began organizing. Unions of Florida citrus fruit workers appeared. At the same time organization of the fruit workers on the Pacific Coast and agricultural workers in New Jersey was attempted. Small unions of agricultural workers sprang up throughout the country. In 1934 the Southern Tenant Farmers Union was formed. At last the underpaid, sweated slum dwellers of the farm were heard of. The papers suddenly became aware of the workers of Imperial Valley.

These different agricultural workers — whether sharecroppers in the cotton states or agricultural workers in New Jersey, whether citrus workers or fruit pickers in Florida or in California — had one thing in common: their attempts to organize were met with vigilante terror and violence. But with incredible courage, in spite of mobs and terror, organization has gone on until they are strong enough to form an international to vote themselves into the powerful C. I. O.

The three or more million of them, with their families, form a large segment of that third of our population which President Roosevelt has described as "ill-fed, ill-housed, and ill-clothed."

They had asked the A. F. of L. to give them an international and had been refused though there were many affiliated unions. Suddenly John L. Lewis threw open his doors to them. In July, 1937, for the first time, the delegates of these submerged people, who represented roughly 100,000 organized agricultural workers, assembled in Denver. They came from every part of the country and from widely diverse industries.

All the principal national groups who work in agriculture — White, Negro, Filipino, Japanese, Mexican, and Latin American — were represented. It was a diverse gathering and a moving one. There were no slick professional delegates. These were workers who had chopped cotton, picked fruit, worked in beet and onion fields. There were oyster shuckers and fish cannery workers from Alaska and from the West Coast, and tree surgeons from Ohio. A man from the great Heinz Pickle Factory in Pittsburgh talked to a tall, colored man who came from a turpentine camp in Florida, where workers are held in virtual peonage. His was, perforce, an underground organization.

The workers of Mr. William Hapgood's Columbia Conserve Corporation of Indianapolis, a cooperative concern, get, beside numerous benefits, from \$1,350 to \$2,250 a year. What a contrast they formed to the little cannery workers from Missouri who make a few cents an hour.

Here were the Southern Tenant Farmers. Their brief history has been written in blood but they have changed the history of the tenant farmer states. Here was Rev. McKinney whose daughter had been shot through the head when his home was riddled with bullets; tall, young Reverend Mitchell who had been hunted through the swamps by vigilantes; Reverend Williams and Willie Sue Blagden who had been flogged in Alabama. Now she was organizing agricultural workers in the Oklahoma spinach fields and had hitchhiked to get here. Five years ago the plight of the tenant farmer and the sharecropper was unknown. Today it is recognized as a major problem of this country.

The unions of California were spottily represented. Mr. William Green, on the twenty-eighth of June, sent a letter to the Federal Unions not to attend the convention and quite a few of those who were affiliated with the A. F. of L. listened to him. With the coming of the C. I. O. into the agricultural field a strange thing happened. The big ranchers of California, who had fought all organization with vigilantes and terror, hastily called in the A. F. of L. organizer Vandeleur, and the workers were summarily told to join the

A. F. of L. or get out. So there appeared what amounts to a company union on the big California fruit ranches.

It is interesting to see just how this was brought about. Frightened by the convention success of the new C. I. O. International, Vandeleur at once got in touch with the Growers and Processors Association of California, which included sixty to seventy canneries. They shared Vandeleur's alarm and signed closed shop contracts, although at that time Vandeleur did not represent one local having actual organized membership in their canneries. Then followed the familiar racket. For three months cannery workers were told to carry an A. F. of L. card, or else — In one case 125 workers were fired for refusing this company union setup.

From the Northwest, the canners and agricultural workers had formed the Northwestern Council. They were helped by the Maritime Federation and the Woodworkers Federation. Strong in canneries and weak in agriculture, they proposed to put on a brisk campaign to bring the 100,000 still unorganized into the fold of the already organized 100,000.

Under the term Agricultural and Cannery Workers are dairy farmers, citrus workers, mushroom growers, and a new union — The United Railway Icemen's Union, which ices perishable fruits. It "was started right for it started C. I. O." its delegate said. It probably has the distinction of being the first union to have begun its existence in the C. I. O.

A new picture of American agriculture must now be recognized: huge acreages planted with spinach, potatoes, asparagus, peas, tomatoes, to be picked, packed, and canned by families of workers. These workers live in rural slums, in incredibly ragged camps, in corrugated iron huts. Within a generation the character of agricultural workers has changed from farm labor, as one thinks of it, to people working in a sweatshop food factory. Families of migrating labor follow the work season along both coasts. Migrations take place family-wise from Arkansas and Missouri to the onion fields of Ohio or the citrus groves of Florida.

On the east coast of Maryland are migrating pickers who have no



home. Here the Gospel Society reported that there were children of white, American parents who had never heard of George Washington or Jesus Christ. They have no place in the world, no stake, anywhere — no community they can call their own. Now, at last, they are organizing.

Of the millions of farmers in this country, only 300,000 belong to organizations such as the Farmers Holiday Association or the Farmers Union. These organizations have proved ineffective because the problem of the owning farmer and the tenant farmer are not the same, and the tenant farmer's problem again differs from the agricultural laborer's. To find some common denominator between them, some way to evolve a working agreement, is one of the tasks before the new union. Again and again the union has stressed the identity of interest of the two groups. In a resolution which embodied the statement of policy the following occurs:

To the working farmers of the country, both organized and unorganized, we express our intention to cooperate with them in every possible way. It is our hope that a conference of the leaders of these working farmers may be called soon in which representatives of our International Union formed at this Convention may participate. Such a conference will, in our judgment, aid in dissolving the confusion engendered consciously by the propaganda of the large-scale, absentee owner and corporate type of farmer. It will serve to clarify the economic and social interests of our respective groups — the farm wage laborers, the family-sized or small farm owner, the tenant, and the true cooperatives, both producer and consumer. We believe such a conference will result in plans and programs of action which will advance our common interests and develop methods by which we may help each other in tackling special problems confronting each group.

Only along this road, we believe, will be found the possibility of achieving that American standard of living which our great country is capable of providing for all classes of its citizenry.



The union foreshadowed a necessary understanding between the millions of working farmers and the agricultural and cannery workers. That certain groups of working farmers already acknowledge this was shown by the fact that at the Denver convention two of the most important guest speakers were Jim Patton of the Farm Union and John Bosch, President of the Farm Holiday Association.

Not only the appalling growth of farm tenancy and mortgage burdens, but a new realization that high distribution costs are helping to undermine them, has made a bond of sympathy between distressed farmers and agricultural workers. Farmers are coming to see that food processors who pay low prices for sweet corn, spinach, and green peas also cut the wages of the workers who sort and pack them. In many states where "corporate farming" is prevalent, farmers are now discussing this common problem with C. I. O. organizers and union members.

Since the Denver convention progress has been steady. Results of the last months of 1937 are reflected in a present membership of 110,000, representing 154 chartered locals in twenty-five states. Approximately 11,000 workers are covered by union contracts with 221 firms. Six districts have held conventions and established district organizations. Again these cold figures fail to tell the real story — the feeling of solidarity and hope and purpose which has come into the lives of these courageous thousands who have faced guns and vigilantes at every step of the way.

The problems still ahead are enormous, but so are the possible gains. And this new union realizes both. Undoubtedly some members of A. F. of L. leadership, joining hands with the large growers and processors' associations, will use terror and treachery to block this movement from New Jersey to California. And the farmer's old suspicion of union labor must be overcome. As a recent union report put it:

The general problem presented here is that of pushing and building trade union organization to improve the condition of wage workers in agriculture along with those in industry, at the same time that we find ways and means of supporting the

great majority of farmers in improving their incomes. Any other policy can only result in driving these millions of farmers into the arms of reactionary anti-labor interests. Such a course would injure the future progress of the entire labor movement and seriously hamper its development. A correct and successful handling of this complicated problem can result in effective alliances between the great mass of farmers throughout the nation with the industrial labor movement and the C. I. O. The political implications of this are obvious. . . .

In the long run, unless a substantial labor movement is built in this field of agriculture and unless substantial progress is made to effectively combat an anti-labor sentiment among the millions of farmers, the labor movement as a whole must suffer and be hampered.

## XX. Other Struggles and Other Unions

SO GREAT has been the drive of the C. I. O., so many unions are beginning promising organizational campaigns, that it is impossible to do them justice within the confines of one short book. Great struggles have taken place which ended with contracts and gains for the workers which it will be possible to mention only briefly.

There are several recent milestones in the forward march of labor.

Chief among these was the famous general strike of 1934 on the Pacific Coast where, under the leadership of young Harry Bridges, the longshoremen made the first break away from the old reactionary leadership of the A. F. of L., and particularly away from Joseph P. Ryan, dictatorial president of the International Longshoremens Association.

The solidarity shown by the different maritime unions during the 1934 general strike resulted in the forming of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific which, in turn, helped the rise and successes of the rank and file movement in the Atlantic, Gulf, and Great Lakes ports, especially among the unlicensed personnel of the crews. It aided, too, in the establishment of the National Maritime Union.

The miserable wages and working conditions, and the notorious "fink" hiring halls dominated by the shipping companies were swept into oblivion following the 1934 strike which led the great series of victories of organized labor throughout the country.

Among those labor leaders who rose to prominence during the Frisco general tie-up was Harry Lundeberg, who was chosen as President of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, and later was given the post of leader of the Seamens Union of the Pacific.

Syndicalist in belief, he has been both suspicious and hostile to the C. I. O. At this writing, Lundeberg stands as one of the chief opponents to an all-inclusive National Industrial Maritime Federation, and advocates an independent status for his sailors' Union of the Pacific. His hostility has not been lessened by the fact that Harry Bridges, whom he formerly supported, has been made C. I. O. representative of the West Coast.

Two years after the great general strike, the Pacific Coast employers thought that the time was ripe to chisel on the 1934 agreements. This resulted in the second giant tie-up extending from the latter months of 1936 to early in 1937. The strike lasted ninety-eight days and completely paralyzed the shipping industry on the West Coast. Its scope included the 37,000 workers directly involved and many additional thousands indirectly affected — the lumber workers in the northwest and the agricultural and cannery workers. Unlike the strike of 1934, there was practically no violence. Each side took its case to the public through press and radio. Strikers cooperated with police in maintaining order in some cities.

The second West Coast walkout immediately gave rise to a sympathy strike on the East Coast, which resulted in transforming the growing rank and file movement of the East Coast I. S. U. into the pro-C. I. O. National Maritime Union. The eastern seamen were also joined in their walkout by organized ships' officers, radio operators, and engineers.

One of the most important issues at stake on both coasts was the control of the hiring halls by the unions. The hiring halls had been a scandal in the industry for years.

Meantime the seamen on the West Coast had become increasingly discontented. This second strike resulted in a greater solidarity between the East and the West and strengthened the emerging young leadership in its fight against the old A. F. of L. bureaucracy which had refused to recognize the strike.

Another milestone in the advancing power of the membership controlled unions was the formation of the National Maritime Union under Joe Curran. When Joe Curran's vessel, the *California*,

was out on the Pacific coast, he observed that the seamen there had better hours and conditions, and he and the other boys made a sit-down which got Secretary of Labor Perkins to the telephone. This started the rank and file movement. It grew rapidly even though the officials supplied scab crews in their efforts to crush the revolt. Soon the Old Guard leaders of the A. F. of L. had nothing left but their charters and Joe Curran had the membership. From it was formed the National Maritime Union which has completely superseded the I. S. U.

The National Maritime Union has voted itself into the C. I. O. and now a contrasting picture is presented. On the West Coast C. I. O. longshoremen are opposed by Lundeberg's Seamen's Union of the Pacific; while on the East Coast the seamen are in the C. I. O. and the longshoremen, under red-baiting Joseph P. Ryan, still in the A. F. of L.

No more lively union exists than the N. M. U. which held its enthusiastic convention during the summer of 1937 when a drive to organize all the unlicensed personnel of the vessels on the Great Lakes was started. By October they had signed closed shop agreements with nine companies engaged in coal transportation. Although this agreement affects only 2,240 men on fifty-six ships, it provides for an eight-hour day, overtime pay, eight holidays a year, improved living quarters, the arbitration of disputes and wage increases ranging from five to twenty-five dollars a month.

The conditions under which American seamen have lived — their bug-infested bunks and the lack of decent sanitation aboard ship — are an old scandal. Hearings before the Maritime Commission in 1937 again called public attention to these evils.

Comprehensive plans were drafted for the longshoremen, the seafaring groups, the licensed crafts, and the fishermen. The purpose was to establish a national unity and a common program along the lines of the Committee for Industrial Organization.

The 1937 conference of August 30th to September 1st in Chicago decided on a National Maritime Convention to be held in January, 1938, in San Francisco.

Meantime a C. I. O. Maritime Committee has been formed on the East Coast whose secretary, Mervyn Rathborne, also head of the American Communications Association, reports a membership of 100,000, including 8,000 of Joseph Ryan's longshoremen who have seceded from him. The longshoremen of the East Coast look over to the West Coast with its rank and file controlled union under Harry Bridges. They see the emergence to power of the Transport Workers Union in New York City and a rustle of uneasiness runs through the longshoremen of the New York waterfront. The seamen on the Pacific Coast revolt against Lundeberg and fail to obey his order to support Beck. Pacific Coast vessels touch New York and the seamen fraternize with the members of the National Maritime Union whose early acceptance of the C. I. O. has had a strong effect on their brothers of the Pacific Coast.

Next to the maritime unions and the longshoremen, perhaps the most strategically situated of the new unions is the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers. Beginning as a small union with but a few thousand members, it has grown to 140,000. Now seventh in size, with 600,000 organizable in the industry, the U. E. R. M. W. ranks as a major C. I. O. organization.

The entrance of this union into the C. I. O. was what is now a familiar story. Federal unions such as that of the big Westinghouse Company of East Pittsburgh were offered only the B rating by the A. F. of L. This meant that its 6,500 members got only one vote as compared to unions with an A rating whose convention delegates carried one vote for each one hundred members. Translated, this meant that the officers of the I. B. E. W. feared a new, vital membership which, with an A rating, might challenge the power of the reigning hierarchy.

Six A. F. of L. federal locals and six independent unions together formed the U. E. R. M. W. Two months later, during the RCA strike at Camden, New Jersey, they joined the C. I. O. Following this the A. F. of L. sent in thirty organizers whose principal job, it developed, was to send the strikers back to work.



Though the industry lends itself to small scale output, three giant firms dominate the electrical products industry: General Electric, Westinghouse, and Allis-Chalmers. Together they make one third of the nation's electrical goods. Each has fifteen big plants scattered in a belt from New England to the Mississippi River.

In its organizing campaign the C. I. O. union has had to fight both employers and two A. F. of L. unions — I. B. E. W. and the Wharton's International Machinists. In spite of this the new union, headed by James B. Carey, has eleven locals in the Westinghouse plants, twelve in General Electric, and three in General Motors electrical products plants.

With 12,000 members in RCA's Camden plant it is the sole collective bargaining agency and at Philco Radio's television plant the union's ten thousand members have a closed shop. Negotiations now in progress with Allis-Chalmers are expected to bring the best contract that any C. I. O. union has signed with comparably great concerns.

The electric light and power industry, employing 200,000 workers, extends into every state in the union — only the railroads are more far-flung. Yet the power industry is controlled by a small group. For instance, 60 per cent of the nation's entire output of electricity is dominated by J. P. Morgan's United Corporation. It is from these utilities that the infamous holding companies have stemmed, bringing such scandals as the Insull debacle. These dubious corporate devices, pyramided one upon another, reached such a peak that the Holding Company Act was finally passed to curb them.

Utilities are among the greatest profitmakers. Their immense profits are gained largely through gouging the public with the highest possible rates and paying the lowest possible wages.

Now the old illusion that the all-powerful utilities could not be organized is shattered. The Utility Workers Organizing Committee, formerly a division of the U. E. R. M. W., headed by Albert Stonkus, has 15,000 members in close to sixty locals over the

country. Already it is successfully challenging the big utilities. In the East, strong locals dot the New York and Pennsylvania industrial areas. The union has contracts with ten companies and a closed shop agreement with the Mountain States Power Company which serves Wyoming and parts of adjoining states. Twelve subsidiaries of the huge Commonwealth and Southern System are organized. On the West Coast, organization is making rapid strides in the Pacific Gas and Electric system. Since all great industries as well as the vast majority of persons use electric power, it is obvious that all labor has an important stake in the organization and success of the U. W. O. C.

Among the most interesting and important of the new unions is that of the Gas, Coke and Chemical Workers organized as District 50 of the United Mine Workers. This union repeated the familiar story of having been greatly stimulated by Section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act. Again, the A. F. of L. offered only a federal labor union rating. The workers, therefore, approached the United Mine Workers of America, pointing out that they were the coal process workers, handling the by-products of coal. Starting in 1936 with 13 local unions and 1,500 members, by September, 1937, they had 103 local unions of 15,000 members, with half of them working under contract.

Only six months ago District 50 entered the Coal Tar Chemical Industry. The chemical revolution is as important as the industrial revolution, and the chemical industry has become a pivotal industry in this country. It has only begun. It is related to glass, rubber, rayon, lacquer, and paper. The coal tar industry, under advanced technical developments, touches such different products as the heavy industrial salts and acids, such different things as aspirin, photographic films, and plastics.

The union decided that it could not, in this highly integrated chemical industry, distinguish between the derivatives of coal tar and other chemicals, so intertwined were they. Thus starting with gas and by-product coke, District 50 has been accorded jurisdiction over all chemical industries. It again is an industry closely con-

trolled by a great labor-hating hierarchy. Four great corporations own the chemical industry in this country: Du Pont, Union Carbon & Carbide, Allied Chemical and Dye, and American Cyanamid.

James Nelson, the young President of District 50 says:

The assembled Boards of Directors of these companies would adequately represent the Executive Committee of the Liberty League and the Republican National Committee. . . .

Recently a barrage of propaganda has been fired against the C. I. O. and other progressive forces in the United States by these gentlemen. In economic and political philosophy they differ from us widely. In the near future it will be necessary for the C. I. O. to come to grips with them in the political arena. And they will be in a better frame of mind to accept their inevitable political defeat if we have first convinced them of the fallacy of their economic reasoning. Their Works Councils, their Employees' Representation plans, their debilitating paternalism must be proven to them inadequate for the aroused and informed American worker. . . .

Our movement is young, our industries are national in scope, our opposition is great, our responsibility is heavy. This implies the need of cooperation from all parts of the C. I. O. movement. We are determined to organize the workers in gas, by-product coke and chemicals, and the United Mine Workers of America has given generously to accomplish this objective. With your cooperation the job can be done.

Outstanding in the field of swift organization has been the work of the United Transport Workers. This union, which has just held its first international convention, is a living proof that the C. I. O. is neither violent nor irresponsible.

By October, 1937, this union had 90,000 members, with lodges in sixteen cities. With the exception of the city-owned Independent Subway, the workers in New York on every commercial passenger vehicle which moves on wheels have been organized and contracts with these city lines are expected shortly. Without a single

break in service, 50,000 New York City transport workers have been organized. Every taxicab in the city, every bus driver, 13,500 men of the Interborough, the 3,200 men of the Third Avenue railway system — all poured into the union, and the public never even knew about it.

As the transport workers themselves emphasize, Mayor La Guardia has been an important factor in these agreements arrived at so peacefully.

The organizing of the transport workers into this powerful union is one of the romances of the C. I. O. In 1934, Michael Quill, the present President of the Transport Workers Union, and now a member of the new City Council, Austin Hogan, the General Secretary, and a handful of other workers, decided to attempt again to organize the transport workers of New York City. In forty years, six separate attempts have been made to organize these workers and each time flourishing unions had in the end been defeated by the open shop tactics of the transit lines.

In 1934 a company union with a Yellow Dog contract, which provided that a worker should never join a labor union, was the lot of the transport workers. Stool pigeons and spies infested the industry. The "Beckies," as the detective operatives were called, watched the men on the job and accompanied them home at night like guardian angels to make sure they would not participate in any way in such subversive movements as the Transport Workers Union.

The handful of union men met in saloons and hallways; they went to the roof tops and met in funeral parlors and rented furnished rooms for their meetings. From the first their idea was to organize as an industrial union which would unite all the workers, without regard to racial, religious, or political differences. They realized that the craft unionism of the past was the rock on which the many hopeful efforts to organize had been wrecked.

In the early organizational campaigns, the powerful ladies' auxiliary played an important part, since it was able to work in the open when the union still had to remain underground.

Like every other one of the great new C. I. O. unions, the Transport Workers tried to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor. According to Austin Hogan, they were told that the workers in the transport industry were a bunch of scabs, that too much money had been spent on them in the past, and that attempts to organize had "failed so often that it was ridiculous to even think the transport men of New York would join a union."

Finally the International Society of Machinists granted them an industrial charter. When, during their struggle with the Third Avenue Railway Company, they appealed for help to Mr. William Green, he suggested that their membership be divided into a dozen craft organizations. It was at this point that they applied for affiliation with the C. I. O. It is a familiar pattern.

The transit industry has always been famous for its long hours and low pay. Michael Quill, in his opening address to the T. W. U., recalled the time when he worked in this city for 33¢ an hour, 12 hours a day, 84 hours a week, 365 days of the year. From the moment of their affiliation with the C. I. O. conditions changed; thousands of workers who were working from 65 to 72 hours a week are today working from 40 to 48 hours, many with a wage of 81¢ an hour. Vacations with pay have been introduced and the industry has been cleansed of stool pigeons and espionage.

Like other C. I. O. unions, they are also an answer to the accusation of dictatorship in the labor movement. It is a rank and file union, run democratically. Austin Hogan states: "We do not just talk about democracy. We practice democracy, and we go further. We train the workers in democratic procedure and show them in real life the value of democracy. The greatest bulwarks for the protection of American democracy are the rank and file industrial unions like the Transport Workers Union."

During the convention it was decided to launch a nationwide drive to organize all the cities of America as New York is organized.

Much has been accomplished toward organizing the shoe industry. Over 200,000 workers are employed in this industry and



52,000 of them have been organized since the C. I. O. began its drive on March 16, 1937. The union started with a membership of 12,000 workers of the United Shoe & Leather Workers Union and 4,000 members of the Shoe Workers Protective Association. Of the 36,000 new members, 8,000 comprised the Boot & Shoe Workers Union of the A. F. of L. who voted to leave the A. F. of L. en masse. Elections were held and as a result the seventy-nine factories in New York City went over to the C. I. O.

Wages in New York City have been increased 19 per cent. Most of the workers newly organized are under closed shop contracts that provide a forty-hour week, 15 per cent increase in wages and a clause to the effect that no member of the United Shoe Workers of America shall be required to work on raw material coming from a house or factory where a strike or lockout exists.

The shipyard workers have waged a memorable battle. They have raised wages, doubled the size of their union and have aimed continually to eradicate one of the plagues of the shipyard industry: the number and variety of rates and the differentials and numerous classifications which give the employer opportunity to practice chiseling and favoritism.

Rapid progress in organizing the packing house workers in the Middle West has been reported by Van A. Bittner. There are approximately 40,000 workers in the organizational area and 25,000 are already signed up in the C. I. O. In the mid-western plants, union membership is closely approaching 100 per cent. The old anti-union strongholds of Swift and Armour, as well as the other Chicago plants, are almost completely organized. The United Packing House Workers which has been set up in Chicago represents more than 10,000 workers. In the Midwest — Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota — nearly 10,000 workers have been organized. In Missouri and East St. Louis, the Armour plants and Cudahy's are completing organization. This is an industry in which organization had previously been at a standstill, and in which employers were notoriously anti-union.

The oil industry was a low wage industry, had a twelve-hour



shift, and, led by Standard Oil, had fought organization. There are in the various divisions — production, refinement, and distribution of petroleum products — what amount to a half million workers. The C. I. O. now has a membership of 100,000 with contracts which cover 85,000 workers. And the wage scale is now one of the highest in the country, 95.1¢ per hour.

This was a union that suffered much from A. F. of L. craft union raids. While there is organization in almost all the great oil companies, including Morgan's Continental Oil, Standard Oil still resists unionization.

One of the original unions to join the C. I. O. was that of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Since the beginning of 1937, its organization has increased from 17,000 to 45,000. Most of the organization on the Mesaba Range has been accomplished since the beginning of June, 1937.

So the great mass industries become organized. The strongholds of the open shop have fallen one by one. Industries where no organization was considered possible two years ago have added their millions to the labor movement, and yet it is only a beginning. It is only an indication of what is possible to the workers of this country under a vital leadership.

### CINCINNATI LABOR REVIVAL

Cincinnati, which once shared with Detroit and Pittsburgh the reputation of being one of the worst open shop towns in America, is rapidly following the other two cities and becoming a union town.

The first four months of the opening of the regional C. I. O. office, under Paul Fuller, saw over 25,000 workers organized around the city of Cincinnati alone, and without a single strike. Thousands more were organized throughout the Ohio Valley region which includes southern Ohio and Indiana, northern Kentucky and Tennessee, and part of West Virginia. Twenty organizers were put into the field. The C. I. O. found itself swamped with work. The

office opened to find 4,000 applications for membership already on the desks.

Cincinnati is the toolmaking center of the country, with 28,000 workers employed in the industry in 153 foundries. These vary from the big concerns employing 2,000 men and more, to small ones having only 100.

They were controlled by the Metal Trades Association, notorious for its anti-labor policy and blacklists. This labor-baiting stronghold was challenged by the C. I. O. and already a quarter of the industry is enrolled in the union. Numerous lodges have been set up. In the Cincinnati district there are twenty Steel Workers Organizing Committee lodges and nineteen new C. I. O. lodges with trades as various as soap workers, white collar workers, state and municipal employees, enrolled.

While the C. I. O. regional office was increasing its membership at the rate of between 4,000 to 5,000 a week, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was cracking the anti-union nut which before had been too hard for it. Cincinnati was the headquarters of the anti-union open shop forces of the men's clothing industry. With the exception of "Golden Rule Nash," the men's clothing trade resisted organization with the result that there was one strike after another.

In August, 1937, the last firm to stand out signed an agreement after a brief strike. Between April and August approximately 4,000 members were added by the Amalgamated.

The A. F. of L. has also carried on a vigorous organizing campaign. It has not only increased the membership of its old unions by thousands, but it has added new unions to its list, notably among the laundry workers.

With all the great gains in the Ohio Valley region there have been no disturbances, no violence, and the few strikes were of brief duration. Whole towns have become almost 100 per cent union towns without a single strike, arrest, or beating. Something like a labor renaissance has occurred around Cincinnati.

## XXI. The West Coast

THE WEST COAST shows clearly the conflicting elements in the A. F. of L.-C. I. O. struggle. There, sharply focused, one sees the basic differences that separate these opposing theories of unionism. There antagonism quickly reached the point of violent action. This bitter controversy between hostile ideas of unionization was typified in the persons of Dave Beck, Seattle teamster czar, and Harry Bridges of the longshoremen, C. I. O. representative for the Pacific Coast.

From Beck in Seattle, down to Los Angeles and the Mexican border, the anti-C. I. O. forces decided to take steps to eliminate the C. I. O. from the Pacific Coast. Beck in the Northwest was said to control the police, the political machinery, and the Civil Service. Uniting with him and his anti-C. I. O. teamsters in a coast-wise program were the A. F. of L., the big business interests, the Chambers of Commerce and the ship owners.

Dave Beck began the attack which was designed to crush the C. I. O., for if the C. I. O. succeeded in dominating the Pacific Coast there was an end to his dream of empire. There was an end, too, to the old line A. F. of L. dictators — Vandeleur in California, Flynn in the Northwest, and all the rest of the A. F. of L. old-timers whose cozy understanding with the employers was threatened by the rapid rise of the C. I. O.

The West Coast now, as always, represents a series of contrasts politically and in the union field. The corruption of its political gangs has been surpassed only in Chicago. Racketeering in unions has been notorious. Yet on the Pacific Coast the Maritime Federation in 1934 actually applied the C. I. O. principles to unionism

before the C. I. O. was born, while the Washington Commonwealth Federation was electing state, county, and national officials through its progressive block before Labor's Non-Partisan League was organized. Curiously, in politics and in some unions, the most corrupt practices flourished side by side with the most militant and advanced tactics in other unions and a united block of progressive elements supported the Roosevelt Administration's policies.

The longshoremen early affiliated with the C. I. O. together with two of the smaller maritime unions.

The powerful Federation of Woodworkers in their Tacoma convention of August, 1937, voted overwhelmingly for C. I. O. affiliation, adding 100,000 to the C. I. O. forces. The Agricultural and Cannery Workers in the Denver convention also voted for C. I. O. affiliation and the strong northwestern cannery unions in local conferences confirmed the Denver decision. What with the C. I. O. clothing-workers' unions, with the small union of the Fur Workers, and the Newspaper Guild, a menacing block of C. I. O. unions was consolidating itself upon the Pacific Coast.

Beck began a relentless attack on the C. I. O. He started with its numerically weakest member, the Newspaper Guild. The circulation men had previously asked the teamsters to organize them and had been refused. When the Newspaper Guild broadened its scope to all employees, the circulation men were organized within the Guild. Beck accordingly demanded a discharge of the nineteen circulation men, many of whom had been with the *Seattle Star* since they were newsboys, and insisted that their jobs should be given to teamsters. When the *Star* management agreed to this and the Guild's demands for the reinstatement of the men were refused, the Guild struck.

Meantime the Central Labor Union stepped in and warned employers and fur workers both against signing agreements with the C. I. O. The fur workers picketed the employers and the A. F. of L. picketed the fur workers. Of the 268 fur workers of Seattle, all but a half dozen were organized in the Union. They are superior, skilled

workers, educated and intelligent, and they felt a great moral indignation at labor making a picket line on labor.

Attacks were made on the C. I. O. longshoremen in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Legal fights played a major part in Los Angeles. The A. F. of L. took twelve men and went to court with injunctions against affiliation of the longshoremen with the C. I. O. In other words, twelve dissatisfied men were to keep all the others from organizing as they wanted.

John Brophy and Lee Pressman came to the coast and mapped the strategy by which the A. F. of L. scheme was defeated.

Beck early moved down to San Francisco on which he had long had his eye, thinking to extend his empire south from the Northwest. There with the longshoremen and the warehouse men he used the same tactics that he had with the Guild's circulation men.

The warehouse men also had asked the teamsters to organize them and been refused. They then became organized under the banner of the longshoremen. The warehouse now became the battleground. The A. F. of L. gave Beck jurisdiction over the warehouse men, although not a warehouse man belonged to an A. F. of L. union, and although there had been an N. L. R. B. decision for the C. I. O. Having had his claim sanctioned by the A. F. of L., Beck threatened to shut down every port on the Pacific Coast and to see that not a truckload of freight moved from any port from the Mexican border to British Columbia.

Said Beck, "Before we are through, we are going to call in the American Legion, fraternal organizations, business interests and the general public to join our efforts to stop irresponsible and communistic action."

At the C. I. O. Conference at Atlantic City, Bridges reported that "400 sluggers at \$10 a day were hired to promote fighting on the waterfront."

J. F. Vizzard, secretary of the employers' Draymans Association said in approval, "The teamsters are fighting our fight as well as their own."



No wonder the employers approved; the plan was to reduce operation costs 50 per cent by eliminating the militant program of the unions.

A minor incident precipitated the throwing of picket lines across the San Francisco waterfront to back the demand that the 11,000 I. L. W. U. warehouse men be turned over to the teamsters' union. The members of the teamsters' union were sent to get some "hot cargo" in the California Packing Corporation warehouse, where the warehouse men had been on strike for two months. In other words, to scab on other union members.

A fight was waged by the longshoremen, which will go down in labor history as the "battle of the sound trucks." The longshoremen moved a sound truck in near the teamsters' picket line and explained over and over what had happened to the teamsters: that they were not in a labor fight and that they were picketing other workers; that there was no quarrel between the rank and file longshoremen and teamsters.

The teamsters also moved up another sound truck to the Embarcadero and, according to a longshoreman, in the teamsters' truck they hid the "mighty Casey" (International Auditor of the Teamsters Union). "But Joe failed to make an appearance. He preferred to bat from his dugout. Using his mighty lungs, the hidden Casey pleaded with all 'loyal' A. F. of L. men to return to the I. L. A. and the tender, loving arms of Joseph P. Ryan."

Meantime another incident occurred which pictured as though upon a brilliant screen the moves of the A. F. of L. officialdom. The marine firemen had voted on the question of the C. I. O. Their ballots had been burned. Ferguson, secretary of the union, called a secret meeting in Garibaldi Hall, where he furnished 150 W. P. A. and waterfront floaters with phony union books. His intention was to pack a meeting of the firemen in order to put through a resolution forbidding the firemen's passing through the teamsters' picket line. Without firemen no vessels could move out of the port of San Francisco. Longshoremen got wind of this plot and mingled with the



crowd as they left the hall. When the packed meeting assembled, Harry Bridges asked for the floor which was accorded him by the rank and file, overruling the decision of the chair.

What he had to tell them was like a bombshell exploding. He pleaded for calm, told them to avoid trouble and to give the firemen with the phony books safe conduct through the crowd. Outside two or three hundred longshoremen had been assembled in the event of trouble. An uproar followed Bridges' words. Ferguson was immediately suspended and the marine firemen passed into the control of the rank and file. One more union had thrown off the old, disreputable A. F. of L. leadership.

In a letter from the rank and file to the *Voice of the Federation*, Ferguson's exit is thus described:

"He ranted and raved about Communist-C.I.O. plots and went down the line 100 per cent with Lee Holman, Willie Hearst, Casey, Oscar Carlson and der Fuehrer in red-baiting the membership, and was booed by the entire body (save his clique). It was only through the pleas of cooler heads that some sincere and honest brothers didn't go up and take him apart just to see what kind of cogs and wheels made such a scab herder under the nom de plume of 'Secretary' tick."

Meanwhile Lundeberg was having trouble with his seamen. At a stormy meeting they refused to agree not to go through Beck's picket line. With Beck beaten in the battle of the sound trucks, where the doughty Joe Casey only "batted from the dugouts," with the methods of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy exposed by Ferguson, with Lundeberg's power over the seamen shaken, the first engagement between the forces of Harry Bridges and Dave Beck resulted in a total defeat for the teamster king.

To save his own face Beck said that farmers had petitioned him to lift the picket line at the Embarcadero and allow their perishable fruits and vegetables to move. Beck called the picket line off. He had really had an arrangement with the Association of Growers, and in five days almost everything was considered perishable.

Completely defeated, Beck saw his own union moving over to the C. I. O. in Los Angeles and Oakland, and realized that if the strike was continued a few more weeks he would lose his union to the C. I. O. Though, in this instance, Beck failed, the conflict is far from finished. He has plenty of employers, money, and the newspapers to support him.

Supporting Harry Bridges in his fight against Beck and the old A. F. of L. machine was the largest union west of the Mississippi — the newly formed International Woodworkers of America who ably exemplified why unions leave the American Federation of Labor.

In the convention of the Brotherhood of Carpenters in Lakeland, Florida, November, 1936, one block of nineteen delegates stood out conspicuously from the rest. The delegates to the Carpenters' convention are all mature men, and many of them are aged, scarcely to be distinguished from the inmates of the Old Men's Home, in whose hall the convention — the first in eight years — was held. These nineteen young men stood out as conspicuously as a bevy of debutantes in an old ladies' home. They were the delegates of the recently formed Federation of Woodworkers of the Northwest. They were given a seat but no voice, and they were also given the run-around. They had been paying in a thirty-five cent per capita tax which amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars, and in return, they maintained, their strike had been outlawed and their charters jerked by the Brotherhood.

The convention over, they got into their chartered car which had brought them from the Northwest and made straight for Washington, D. C., and John L. Lewis. Here they were told there was no way in which they could at present affiliate, as the C. I. O. was organizing hitherto unorganized workers and not accepting membership from those already organized but broken off from A. F. of L. unions.

The Federation of Woodworkers has had a phenomenal rise. Organized only five years before, this union already had 100,000 members. They had organized on an industrial basis with, as they said, everything from stump to piano. Included in their membership were such diverse occupations as loggers and lumbermen,

shingle weavers, plywood workers, furniture and cabinet makers, even the makers of split baskets and the engineers and railway men of the back spur railways, even the cooks and flunkies in the camps. Two years ago, Hutcheson, the bulky Republican head of the Carpenters, never averse to feathering his nest, looked with longing at this rich field and took the woodworkers on a non-beneficial basis into his union, the Brotherhood of Carpenters. A non-beneficial basis means that you pay high per capita dues, and get none of the benefits, such as an automatic membership in the old men's home or a vote at the infrequent conventions.

The discontent mounted steadily during the year and at the Tacoma convention the woodworkers shook themselves free from the Brotherhood. Here at the convention the reason was eloquently given. It is a democratic organization throughout. Those who favored the Brotherhood were given every opportunity to present their case. But during the convention, under the able leadership of Harold Pritchett, the uncertain elements went over to the C. I. O. and even the great Puget Sound local, supposed to be the stronghold of the A. F. of L., enthusiastically joined with the other C. I. O. advocates.

Harold Pritchett is among the ablest of the young leadership which the new labor movement has brought to the surface. Like Bridges he is close to the masses of the workers, is a passionate believer in democratic unions, but he has more hospitality of mind than Bridges, is less irascible and intolerant. A shingle weaver by trade, he played an outstanding part in the lumber workers' strike. In his early thirties, he has already achieved a merited leadership of this powerful union.

The program of the lumberworkers is to organize all unorganized lumbering and woodworking industries. The difficult conquest of the South lies before them. Meantime, their strength on the West Coast menaces the A. F. of L. machine and reinforces the longshoremen and the other C. I. O. maritime unions.

The old, militant spirit of the I. W. W. first plowed up the Northwest and sowed the seed for industrial unionism. The Wobblies in

the old days cleaned out the crummy bunk houses, got better conditions for the lumbermen and fought many brilliant battles. There is still a syndicalist tinge to some of the lumbermen, a heritage of the old I. W. W. days, with the same old syndicalist suspicion toward any centralized authority.

After the Tacoma convention, William Hutcheson declared war on the Woodworkers. Beck aided him. Presently teamsters patrolled the rivers in picket boats to keep the logs of the C. I. O. loggers and lumbermen from moving. Commenting on the situation in the *New York Times*, Richard L. Neuberger, labor expert on West Coast affairs stated:

Today, in result, A. F. of L. picket lines surround the mills and camps. The A. F. of L. rejects C. I. O. demands that it remove its picket lines. The C. I. O. scorns A. F. of L. suggestions that it give up the newly acquired woodworkers. The nature of most logging operations in the Northwest has made the A. F. of L. picket lines highly effective. The logs are cut in the mountains and floated downstream to the mills. Sailors sympathetic to the A. F. of L. have manned picket boats in the rivers and assertedly kept the logs from the mills. There has been some violence. Carpenters say they will not use C. I. O. lumber, and teamsters threaten not to truck it. The flow of logs to mills has dwindled to a mere trickle and many mills have had to shut down.

Portland was under a practical blockade and remained so for months. Women of the Woodworkers Ladies' Auxiliary appeared with baseball bats to protect their husbands' jobs from the A. F. of L. "School is starting and we need money for shoes and books," cried Mrs. Julia Bertram, President of the Auxiliary. "If the city council won't give protection to the men on the fuel trucks, the lumbermen's wives will go out on the trucks and squad cars themselves and protect their husbands' jobs." The blockade of the lumber workers continued for five months in Portland, in spite of the intervention of businessmen and municipal authorities. Even

the Governor of the State was unable to put an end to this war of Beck and Hutcheson on labor. Governor Martin publicly denounced the A. F. of L. when it refused to abide by an election held under his auspices which the C. I. O. won. The blockade was finally lifted amid some startling confessions by members of the strong-arm squad of the A. F. of L.

What Dave Beck has done in establishing his rule over the unions and businessmen of Seattle is in reality nothing new. It merely brings to a high point of perfection practices well known to the building trade unions in Chicago, as well as in other parts of the country.

Beck has developed an old system to a perfection which might well be termed a labor fascism. It is dangerous, because should it be extended throughout the country, it would mean the enslavement of the unions and a permanent alignment of labor leader and employer. The plan is simple and workable. It means for the worker absolute submission and (for the moment) good wages; for the small businessman, annihilation; for the public, inordinately high prices; for the big businessman, the crushing of competition on the one hand and any insurgency of labor on the other.

A big, florid man, Beck knew how to build up a machine and surround himself with men, all of whom had acquired, at one time or another, liberal reputations. Vandever, his lawyer, is said to be the brains of the Beck machine. Vandever was the lawyer in the famous Centralia I. W. W. case. He defended the boys at the risk of his life.

Mayor Dore, who turned the fire department and tear gas on the lumber strikers in 1934, is Mr. Beck's staunch supporter. Beck frequents the society of the big businessmen of Seattle and he had hoped that his well-oiled plan of controlling both labor and big business might extend the length of the Pacific Coast. It worked so well in Seattle and Portland, why not San Francisco and down to the Mexican border?

In the Northwest, they will tell you, Beck deals with labor as a commodity. Beck's idea was of organizing employers. The employers then organize the workers by means of a notification on the



bulletin board to join the union. In return for fair wages and a restriction on hours, Beck promises industrial peace and the driving out of any competition.

For organizing the brewers, Beck promised to keep all competing beer out of the territory. For organizing the grocery clerks or the big laundries and cleaning establishments, Beck put all sorts of difficulties in the way of the small one-man establishments.

From there Beck moved into bakeries, wholesale drugs, and a variety of industries all of whose members are rated as teamsters. He denies that he is paid for "protection" and also denies the existence of "goon" or strong-arm squads. For answer his opponents point to court records where newsboys have been beaten up by men who escaped in cars not unknown to Beck.

Labor sympathizers in Seattle will tell you that if anyone dares to get up on the Union hall floor and oppose any measure of the Beck contingent, he may be pounced on from the union floor. So Beck with his beef squad, a political backing, a well-oiled machine and an ever-increasing sphere of influence looked to a long and happy reign. But a cloud, somewhat bigger than a man's hand, was appearing over the Beck horizon. This cloud was the C. I. O. with Harry Bridges as the West Coast representative.

Harry Bridges emerged from the successful longshoremen's strike of 1934 as the dominant progressive labor figure on the Pacific Coast. Harry Bridges' rise to power did not then bother Beck, whose teamsters supported the longshoremen's strike and were a handsome factor in their victory. But after the 1936 strike, Bridges swung the longshoremen over to the C. I. O. and led the movement to swing over the entire Pacific waterfront. Beck then perceived that he had been nurturing in Bridges a viper who was to worst him in his first attempt to drive the C. I. O. from the Pacific Coast.

Bridges, lean, impatient, is a passionate believer in the voice of the rank and file. His slogan is to keep close to the masses. He is without oratorical tricks. He is direct, forceful, and has the implicit confidence of his own workers and the masses of the workers on the West Coast. Defying Beck and the A. F. of L. machine upon the



occasion when he and his organization were expelled from the Central Labor Council of San Francisco, he stated from the floor:

"This is not a question of the C. I. O. or A. F. of L. That is a national issue which will be determined nationally, and while I'm on the subject I want to say that the C. I. O. is here to stay no matter what happens here tonight or elsewhere in the country. The C. I. O. is labor's answer to the A. F. of L.'s failure for more than twenty-five years to organize in the mass production industries."

## XXII. New Strike Techniques

WE HAVE run through the roster of the unions and seen their amazing gains attain the proportions of a mass movement. What new techniques has the C. I. O. evolved to make such progress possible? What has labor besides its numbers to combat the Mohawk Valley Plan with its vigilante committees, its phony back-to-work movements and the battery of union-breaking techniques we have been discussing?

First of all, labor's greater unity. For in spite of the as yet unhealed breach between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., for the first time all labor has thought and acted as a unit, as business has long since done. The old slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all," has come to life again. This sense of unity — the identity of interest of all workers of whatever union, making them in truth members of one body — is the C. I. O.'s greatest source of power. It begins in the industrial union which embraces all the workers of an industry, then leaps the bounds of the industry and sees the interrelation of all industries.

When a small and obscure strike occurs, a wise and experienced adviser like Brophy may take the helm, and Lewis himself, the shrewdest of negotiators, may close the deal. On the other hand, a switch is thrown by power workers in Saginaw, Michigan and the repercussions of this reckless act shiver through all the units of the far-flung steel strike.

No longer isolated by distance, the East Coast Maritime Union zealously watches what is happening on the Pacific waterfront between Harry Bridges and Beck, the A. F. of L. dictator of the Northwest.

Akin to this sensitivity of the whole body of the C. I. O. to the especial needs of any group of workers on strike is a resulting integration in the labor movement, of which the A. F. of L., by its very structure, was incapable.

A great labor union, just as any other enterprise, must have finances for its work. How these funds are accumulated and how they are spent is of greatest importance to the union. On nothing is the general public more misled than on the subject of labor finances. The C. I. O. was, in the beginning, financed with a large sum from the war chest of the United Mine Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the I. L. G. W. U. as well as contributions from the other eight original founders. The Steel Workers Organizing Committee started out with a cool half million from the C. I. O. treasury, again mostly contributed by the U. M. W. A. Young unions, such as the Agricultural Workers, the Shipbuilders and others, may have sums loaned to them from the C. I. O. but it is expected that the growth in membership will repay these loans. Such unions as the Automobile Workers do not need financing from anyone but themselves. Their finances are typical of the C. I. O. unions, although the exact ratio of what goes to the central office and to the international office may differ. In the U. A. W. U., which rose to 425,000 members before the fall layoffs of 1937, a dollar a month is paid by each worker; of this, 65 per cent remains in the local treasury from which the local organizers and union and other expenses are paid. Of the percentage that goes to U. A. W. U. headquarters, five cents per capita is sent to the central office of the C. I. O.

During the Auto Workers Convention of 1937 it was stated that \$300,000,000 in wages had been added annually to the payroll since the rise of the U. A. W. U. A good investment for a twelve-dollar-a-year payment.

A great development has been seen in the legal field. Before any trouble has occurred, the legal department will already have looked forward to the hazards which may occur and be ready to support the civil rights of the strikers and to defend them in court against

frame-ups. What the strikers' rights are, what they can insist upon, are not left for the moment of decision. There will be legal information ready for the workers in advance of any trouble.

The field representatives encountered in many localities municipal ordinances designed to prevent distribution of leaflets or other literature, the holding of mass meetings, or picketing of any kind. Local legal aid was obtained to contest the legality of such ordinances, with a high degree of success. To protect the possible arrest of organizers or other persons sympathetic with the drive, a national system of bail bonds was arranged. Under this system the National Surety Corporation made available to the S. W. O. C., in each locality where the organizing drive was under way, bail bonds which could be called for at a moment's notice.

In strike situations, the S. W. O. C.'s legal setup included both local attorneys in towns where a strike was under way and a group of competent attorneys thoroughly familiar with labor's legal problems who could be sent to those places where the legal fight became most severe.

Specific measures for protecting labor through state legislation have been recommended, and in some states, notably Pennsylvania, several such bills have been enacted.

The National Labor Relations Act has been used extensively against open shop employers. The La Follette Committee has been called upon where flagrant violations of workers' civil liberties were carried on by employers or state or local officials.

Of greater and greater importance in the present day union setup is the Education and Research Department. And while much has been done, adequate research departments and intensive educating of new union membership are still gravely lacking in the new unions. The vital part research can play is illustrated by the following story, an instance when the fate of a strike depended on a piece of information. In 1912, in the textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the outcome of the strike swung in the balance. The union resources were almost exhausted. The union was ready to capitulate. A friendly reporter happened to find out that the American

Woolen Company was trying to float a new bond issue. They were going to the women of New England, but these conservative investors had already been impressed with Professor Vida Scudder's words, to the effect that if the women of New England knew the conditions under which the woolen workers lived and the consequent toll of human life, they would never buy another yard of cloth until the conditions had been remedied.

Others failed to invest, not for any humanitarian reasons, but because of the insecurity of a strike-torn industry. The failure to float the bond issue during a strike made the employers eager to settle, but without this bit of knowledge, the strikers might have been lost.

Nothing shows the difference between modern strike techniques and old strike techniques more than this anecdote. Under the T. W. O. C. this would not have been left to chance. But many unions today are just as vulnerable as were the workers in Lawrence in 1912.

Research in the established unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers, the United Mine Workers, is of course no new thing. The use of figures and statistics has long been usual, but it is becoming of increasingly greater importance. The financial situation of the industry affected is of the utmost importance to the strike leaders. Figures are used in negotiations. They are an essential part of strategy in mapping out any strike campaign. What is the state of the inventory? Has a great surplus of the article been accumulated? Is the employer in a state to stand the long siege of a strike, and are there important orders ahead which must be filled?

All these questions involving his raw material, his ultimate market, his financial rating, are important in appeals to the public and in determining the strike strategy.

It should be the province of the still neglected research department to know everything about the industry, its financial rating, its source of supplies, its methods of transportation. The research department analyzes a company's financial statements and knows

what its profits and losses, assets and liabilities are. It knows the cost of production, and how much of the dollar of production is spent on labor. This, by the way, is very much less than the general public is led to believe.

Labor's share in the cost of commodities is given in an article in *The Annalist* of July 16, 1937, by A. T. Shurick, who states:

"As a matter of fact, wages account for a relatively small part of commodity costs, the percentages of the f. o. b. plant labor cost to the total cost in 1929 ranging as follows: Boots and shoes, 23 per cent; bread and bakery products, 18 per cent; men's clothing, 19.9 per cent; cotton goods, 21.3 per cent; steel and rolling mills, 20.5 per cent; wholesale meat packing, 4.8 per cent; motor vehicles (excluding bodies and parts), 9.8 per cent. The average of the forty-eight largest manufacturing industries (having plus \$150,000,000 annual payrolls) was 18.2 per cent. . . . The demands of labor are currently less extravagant than commonly pictured."

Such facts should be known and used more fully in the union's demand for higher wages in negotiations and for the use of the membership and the general public.

But the research department will not stop here in learning about its industry. The question of industrial diseases will loom large in many unions. The study of these diseases and the protection of the worker through the enactment of legislation are important phases of a union's legitimate activities.

Hand in hand with the Department of Research is that of Education. Workers' education is a comparatively new thing in this country. It is perhaps here that the C. I. O. has been least efficient. The leaders have said when we organize them, then we can educate them. Up to now the central office at Washington has made no recommendations but has left this to the individual unions.

Friendly critics of the C. I. O. have urged in vain that education and organization should go hand in hand; that it is education which makes leaders. More education than that furnished by the union hall is necessary when union membership is increasing by hundreds of thousands. It is lack of education which leads to individualistic



acts of violence. And this same lack which leads to a romantic conception of the labor movement on the one hand and an old-fashioned one on the other. Discipline is impossible without education, and discipline is the very backbone of the modern union. Workers who have studied the history of the labor movement, strike strategy, and the function of union organization, know that it is ever the policy of the opponent to provoke the workers to sporadic acts of violence.

Let a gun be discovered in a flying squadron car and the press agent of the mill owner can accomplish miracles. One worker found with a stick of dynamite is a godsend to the employer. In fact it has become almost a routine procedure for mill owners to have dynamite planted or arrange fake bombings which are then blamed on the union.

The broad objective of workers' education is the study of our social life and the relationship of the worker to the whole economic structure of the country.

It is interesting to note that the southern tenant farmers especially wanted arithmetic. The accounts had never been kept by the tenant or the sharecropper, himself. Now he wants to know why he is always in debt at the end of the year.

Workers' education teaches how to run a union, what the meaning of collective bargaining is, the meaning of a contract. A prime lesson which workers' education has to teach the young recruits is one on which all successful leaders have based their dealings with employers. That is that the term "collective bargain" implies a trade in which both sides get something. The contract, which insures industrial peace for a specified period, is the essence of the bargain.

What the workers want to know about most is the economic side of the world they live in. They ask first of all for the social sciences. They want courses in economics, the history of the labor movement, industrial situations, government, economic history, legislation, community problems, problems affecting themselves as consumers. They want to study parliamentary law, strike strategy, how to run

unions, social philosophy, and the problems of the labor movement in other countries. There has been a steady drive from beneath, by the rank and file — a progressive demand for more workers' education, which is being met more and more by the unions of this country.

Incorporated early in the Auto Workers was a vigorous movement for education. The S. W. O. C. has, on the contrary, left this up to the individual organizer. If, like Paul Fuller, regional director of the Southern Ohio district, he was a strong advocate of workers' education, a fine movement would be well developed. In the Mahoning Valley, in and around Johnstown, there was no workers' education. In Portsmouth in the fall of 1936, a Labor Chautauqua was led by Paul Fuller which resulted in Portsmouth becoming a C. I. O. town. Moreover, this whole tri-state area was unionized, with practically no strikes resulting.

The workers are everywhere reaching out for education and the movement is growing. Dr. Hilda Smith, director of the W. P. A. workers' education projects says:

The vitality of this movement in itself makes it significant. It will not be downed. It seems to flourish anew in an atmosphere of opposition, under attack. Its impetus in this country today makes it possible to predict that if all funds were withdrawn by the government, by the labor movement and by cooperating groups, teachers and students would enthusiastically carry on classes, because they are convinced these classes are essential to significant social change.

Given this indomitable spirit, workers' education, with or without adequate support, will continue to make progress, reaching more and more men and women who in turn will reach others in factories, stores, offices, and mills; in homes; on farms, in many scattered workshops. The labor movement, social and industrial organizations, and political parties are more and more influenced by the thought and action of an increasing number of students from workers' classes. As workers' educa-

tion shapes itself, so will the activities of these groups reflect classroom discussions, which are themselves based on the immediate and future needs of labor.<sup>a</sup>

So all over the country, in union halls, in Y. W. C. A. clubrooms, in churches, you may see workers studying — a class of miners studying science; in a southern town, men in overalls learning about their own problems. Shoe workers in New England towns, textile workers in Pennsylvania, automobile workers, and steel workers — all learning about their problems, about the land in which they live and their relation to it and the part the union can play in their lives.

Bound up with education and research is the essential need for labor to tell its story to the public, both in the community where an industrial struggle is taking place and through the country as a whole. The N. L. R. B. and the La Follette Committee have spread before us the weapons that are being used against the workers. They have shown shameless collusion between mills, police, and public officials. They give the picture of industry, armed as against a foreign enemy, they recount the story of vigilante groups financed with the aid of the mill. The new techniques of the strikebreaking detective agencies and the use of private citizens to break strikes are all told.

Yet with all this knowledge, with their former status progressively destroyed, those workers who constitute the middle class are still befuddled by the employers during times of industrial conflict.

To make them realize their relation to the world as it is, is one of labor's greatest tasks. Labor has not yet told its own story so that the man in the street may understand what it means when Senator Ellender of Louisiana lets forth a blast at the C. I. O. accusing it of "enslaving us." Labor has not made clear to middle-class people the real purpose of Congressmen in launching their vicious attacks against labor. The man in the street still does not understand that such spokesmen are upholding those who think it is the func-

<sup>a</sup> *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November, 1935.

tion of government to secure the gains of the few as against the welfare of the many.

Logically these "average citizens" should stand with labor, since labor's aims and the aims of the New Deal, for which they voted with such vehemence, are the same. Up to now propaganda by business interests has kept these groups apart. Labor must bring them together. It is through such an alliance, linking the middle-class dwellers in small cities and towns with organized labor and the farmers, that this country can ultimately triumph over undue privilege.

The very fate of Democracy may depend on which side the middle class and the farmers stand.

An aspect of the great organizational drive, a power behind the strikes which have occurred, has been the extraordinary acumen in bargaining displayed by such leaders of the C. I. O. as Sidney Hillman, Philip Murray, and the leaders of the S. W. O. C. and John L. Lewis, himself.

In all the publicity attendant on sit-down strikes, on flying squadrons, on huge mass demonstrations, this fact has been overlooked: that quietly and without a major strike, hundreds of thousands of workers have been brought under contract all over the country.

These masterly feats in negotiation are as much a part of the advancing ranks of labor as the strike weapon itself. For the purpose of the strike is to negotiate a successful contract, and to negotiate a successful contract without a strike is a double victory.

Also overlooked is the fact that during the strike of Little Steel, while the forces against labor were accusing the C. I. O. of not being dependable, quietly and patiently the S. W. O. C. had organized and got contracts for 200,000 more workers, making a total of half a million unionized without a major strike.

The vast gains in many other industries, such as the Radio and Electrical Workers (from 25,000 to 125,000 workers organized), already referred to, are other examples of the quiet, constructive

campaigns in which labor's force and the ingenuity of its leaders affected numberless contracts with employers.

Behind these peaceful victories, impossible without labor's having shown its massed strength, were the victories achieved on the picket line. Behind the successful strikes in rubber, autos, glass, etc. are new strategies and techniques of great significance to all labor.

Organization, discipline, mobility, and communications are the four wheels on which a modern strike moves. These together uphold the imponderable quality of morale.

Of all the new strike techniques, the sit-down or stay-in strike has been the one most discussed. A sit-down is a natural form of protest, and every growing child confronted with household tasks invents spontaneously both the "quickie" and the slow-down on the job. All these most discussed techniques are inherent in human nature.

What was equivalent to the sit-down was an old custom of the mine workers. When the company became so economical with timber that safety was endangered, coal ceased to come up. The sit-down appeared long ago, was known in many places throughout the country, and is distinctly not a foreign importation. The Akron rubber workers were using the sit-down consciously long before the great political sit-downs of France.

The sit-down strike during the winter of 1936-7 became what was almost an epidemic. Everything sat down; there were sit-downs in some dozens of A. F. of L. unions, for all of William Green's disapproval.

There are manifold advantages for workers in the sit-down. The strikers are far less vulnerable than they are on the picket line because employers hesitate to attack the sit-downers when it may injure their own property. The sit-down effects a complete tie-up and the workers are protected against violence and strikebreakers, from cold weather and the rain. The plant is completely closed and scabbing is impossible; as a training ground for education, it is far better than the ordinary strike.



The technique of the sit-down strike has been improved since it first appeared. Now all the workers no longer stay in the plant. The outside picket line and patrol must support the sit-down or it would be easily broken and the sit-downers evicted. Various strike activities must support the sit-down, such as the kitchen and the maintenance of contact between the outside and inside leadership.

It is interesting to observe that in all the big sit-down strikes of a mass industry where no women are employed, no women are allowed inside. In a sit-down that employed both men and girls, I noticed two older women standing apart from the young people who were engaged in roller skating in the basement. On inquiry they turned out to be matrons whose presence had been requested by the strikers.

The hue and cry that was raised against the sit-down from the halls of Congress to practically every newspaper in the land, was the usual reaction against the unaccustomed, which in this instance involved a new conception of job ownership. The idea that the sit-down strikers were "taking possession" of the plant or conceived the plant to be theirs, is ridiculous.

As to the legality of the sit-down, such observers as Mr. Landis, Chairman of the S. E. C. and newly appointed Dean of the Harvard Law School, stated that in time sit-downs might be held as legal as other strikes, which in their early days were considered illegal. Legislation to outlaw the sit-down strike is in process in several states and has been blocked in several others. In time, the public may prefer the more orderly procedure of a sit-down to the costly violence of the usual strike. But before this happens, the public will have to be more interested than it is now in the causes for the strike and in what the strikers are trying to do, and there will have to be a progressive recognition of the workers' right to a job.

The changed conception of property rights involved in this new view is really nothing but an increased recognition of the worker's right to a job, though this shift in emphasis is not yet realized.

Often the picket line is organized long before any strike is declared. As in the case of the Youngstown picket line, the pickets'



dependability and discipline will have been proved beforehand. There will be a complete list of pickets with a picket captain for every five or ten men. There will be block captains ready to get out the men in any given district in the least possible time, and there will be the motor corps ready to transport pickets from one gate to another if the plant area is a far-flung one and the entrances are numerous as in steel or autos.

Labor, organized, as well as unorganized, will refuse to tolerate abuse of the sit-down or work stoppages forced by a few against the will of the many. But the sit-down is undoubtedly here to stay, a very potent weapon in the unequal warfare which the employer wages against labor.

As a wise old auto worker remarked, "Sit-down strikes ought to be like the strap my pappy had hanging beside the kitchen door — in plain sight, but seldom used."

Of major importance in modern strike procedure is the flying squadron — not so much the kind of squadron seen in the textile strike of 1934 with large bands of pickets flying across state lines from one city to another, but squad cars used to transport available strikers from one gate to another or wherever they may be most needed. The mobilizing of the pickets, without tiring them out or showing too great a display of force, is another important element. The patrolling of the picket line by the flying squadrons, keeping the pickets in touch with events, bringing them food and seeing that they are on duty, is another one of their uses. For, as has been said, mobility and communications are the life blood of the modern strike. The far-flung picket lines are apt to be connected by telephone to a central picket headquarters, while the sound car is used to direct picket action, inspire the strikers, announce mass meetings and demonstrations. Its great booming voice has become an integral part of a strike, and so has the use of cars that have the loud speaker. When the workers have the loud speaker, in the open air, the picket line can become a mass meeting at a moment's notice.

New, too, is the establishment of the picket hut or tent, which sprang up spontaneously in many different parts of the country.

In rubber the "special housing campaigns" have already been noted. The picket tents were supplied with radio, furniture, etc.

In the Atlanta, Georgia, automobile strike, picket tents gave the effect of club houses, where boys played cards, read, or had a little music instead of tramping endlessly along the picket line.

Many of the mass picket techniques of today have their origin in the orderly mass picket line of the Passaic Textile Strike of 1926. Here the pickets marched two by two at some distance apart and each five couples was officered by a captain with an orange arm band. Impressive demonstrations occurred which did not, on the one hand, suggest a disorderly mob or, on the other, a military organization.

When a picket line is ragged, disorderly, and given to throwing stones at scabs, it harks back to a less organized day. It is probable that in such a strike literature will be wanting, the women unorganized, and the strategy poor.

In a modern strike, the strategy board is a most important feature. It is the modern descendant of the old Strike Committee. The strategy board is in sensitive contact with the pressure of the rank and file.

An outstanding example of how the strategy board works today is the incident of the sit-down in the Chevrolet plant in the great auto strike. This sit-down was in response to a sensitive awareness of the desire of the rank and file who were urging further pressure. Its strategy of feigning the sit-down in Chevrolet 9, thus withdrawing company guards to that point and actually carrying out the sit-down in Chevrolet 4, the key shop where the motors were made, was a masterly maneuver.

A fine example of modern strategy, too, was the use of the radio in the Goodyear Rubber strike early in 1936 when the whole working community stood by its radios all night awaiting an attack on the picket line by vigilantes.

Contrast such well thought out, deliberate strategies with the careless, unplanned march on Youngstown.

In a modern strike all the working community is involved, not

merely the men on strike and the women affected in the industry, but the women in the homes and the young people attached to the strikers' families. The morale of a strike depends on this, and resolutions supporting women's auxiliaries have been adopted in the conventions of all the new unions.

Nothing is more significant than the active part women have taken in the recent industrial conflicts. The work done by the women's auxiliaries in autos has already been stressed. When the C. I. O. was first started, it inherited a strike in Wheeling Steel in Portsmouth, Ohio. The men said that they had not formed the picket line before the women's auxiliary was there with coffee and sandwiches. They couldn't have won the strike, they said, without the women.

In Little Steel, the women's auxiliaries were not developed to the same extent as in autos. The conservative, old-world women are generally harder to organize than those of American birth, but in Indiana Harbor, the women did yeoman service. Indeed, there was no place where the women did not take some part.

The unions which have come into the C. I. O. most recently, such as the Woodworkers, have splendid auxiliaries. The militant action of the women on the Pacific Coast in defending their husbands' jobs against the obstructions caused by the A. F. of L. forces is an example of their spirit.

A new era has arrived for the women's auxiliaries. Splendid in times of strike, they have tended to disintegrate in times of peace for want of direction. But in Pontiac, in Detroit, on the West Coast, women are entering into rent fights and various consumer problems as vital to them in times of peace as winning a strike in times of war.

Not only the women, but the young people take part in the strike activities. In Indiana Harbor, every Saturday was a children's day, and in many different parts of the country there have been children's days when the children are encouraged to make up their own slogans and paint them. One little fellow was found printing the sign:

WE ARE UMAN BEANS!

Indicative of the new day in unionism is the fact that the union hall is no longer a mysterious thing to which Pa repairs and about which the young people and children know nothing. The recreational activities no longer stop when the strike does. A modern organization like the United Auto Workers has a recreational director who encourages the young people, sons and daughters of union members, to take part in athletics, music, and dramatic events.

The use of literature is an integral part of strike techniques. While strike bulletins and newspapers have been used for many years, they were never used to better effect than in the auto strike. In a modern strike, a skilled newspaperman, familiar with labor publicity, is often employed by the union. He makes contacts with the press, steers reporters to human interest stories, establishes a relationship between the strike strategy board and the press. More important are the strike papers and bulletins giving last minute news and letting workers know what is happening in other strike centers, welding the strikers and the working committee into a cohesive whole. Special handbills appear in a crisis. The lively new papers being published by some of the unions are a yardstick with which one can compare the old and new unions. Nothing was duller than some of the old labor publications.

The new labor movement also writes its own story as it goes along. Examples of workers' letters are given in this book, and they appear in every issue of the papers. The workers eloquently tell the story of their victories.

Cartoons and drawings tell the workers' story. In workers' papers the graphic statistic is used more and more.

During 1937 two beautiful books were put out, one by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union at its last convention and the other by the Maritime Union on the West Coast. *Men and Ships*, an eighty-eight page volume of pictures of their workers ranks with the I. L. G. W. U. volume. A new labor journalism is coming into existence.

The new labor movement sings, on picket line and in union hall

— in southern textile centers, and among the steel workers. Wherever the new unions spring up, the workers sing.

The new labor movement writes and acts out its own struggle. During the winter, plays were acted over the far-flung strike front so often, from Kansas City to Flint, that observers felt a new folk drama was in the process of being born.

A living newspaper presentation called *Labor Marches On* was acted in Flint during the auto strike. It was written by Josephine Herbst and myself, and directed by Morris Watson. The workers walked away with the performance and made up their own lines, their own action, creating a living thing out of the bare bones we had given them. Later they independently wrote and acted an episode of their own, calling it *A Day In Front of Fisher 1*.

It is to be noted in discussing these new techniques, that many of them are only the expansion and bringing into general use of techniques long employed in vital unionism. The use of mass strength, mass picketing, mass singing has been instinctive with all militant unions, whether in the struggles of the I. W. W., the T. U. U. L.'s industrial unions, the United Mine Workers, or the independent strikes of the textile workers in 1929.

Such unions as the International Ladies Garment Workers, and The Amalgamated Clothing Workers have pioneered in building membership morale through education and cultural activities, and the I. L. G. W. U.'s brilliant show *Pins and Needles* is the hit of 1937-8. This gay revue has done more to make labor understood than a dozen solemn treatises.

Indeed, as Julius Hochmann, vice-president of the I. L. G. W. U. said, "The marriage of the arts and labor is not far off."

## XXIII. The National Labor Relations Board

### THE PRESIDENT, FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT, ON APPROVING THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT

*This act defines, as a part of our substantive law, the right of self-organization of employees in industry for the purpose of collective bargaining, and provides methods by which the Government can safeguard that legal right. It establishes a National Labor Relations Board to hear and determine cases in which it is charged that this legal right is abridged or denied, and to hold fair elections to ascertain who are the chosen representatives of employees.*

*A better relationship between labor and management is the high purpose of this act. By assuring the employees the right of collective bargaining it fosters the development of the employment contract on a sound and equitable basis. By providing an orderly procedure for determining who is entitled to represent the employees, it aims to remove one of the chief causes of wasteful economic strife. By preventing practices which tend to destroy the independence of labor it seeks, for every worker within its scope, that freedom of choice and action which is justly his.*

*The National Labor Relations Board will be an independent quasi-judicial body. It should be clearly understood that it will not act as mediator or conciliator in labor disputes. The function of mediation remains, under this act, the duty of the Secretary of Labor and of the Conciliation Service of the Department of Labor. It is important that the judicial function and the mediation function should not be confused.*



*Compromise, the essence of mediation, has no place in the interpretation and enforcement of the law.*

*This act, defining rights, the enforcement of which is recognized by the Congress to be necessary as both an act of common justice and economic advance, must not be misinterpreted. It may eventually eliminate one major cause of labor disputes, but it will not stop all labor disputes. It does not cover all industry and labor, but is applicable only when violation of the legal right of independent self-organization would burden or obstruct interstate commerce. Accepted by management, labor, and the public with a sense of sober responsibility and of willing cooperation, however, it should serve as an important step toward the achievement of just and peaceful labor relations in industry.*

Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection. — *Wagner Act*

Besides new techniques and expansion of the labor movement into new fields, labor had a new ally embodied in federal law. The National Labor Relations Board is the greatest adjunct to labor's own strength that this country has ever known. Without it, it is fairly certain that the victories gained over the open shop employers during the past two years would have been impossible. The attacks on it which have come from labor are unfortunate and may pave the way for amendments of the Act by which employers hope to pull its teeth.

The A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. have both profited beyond measure by this beneficial legislation. The exposure of the strikebreaking Mohawk Valley Formula has been one of the milestones in labor history.

From its beginning, in the Fall of 1935, the N. L. R. B. handled 11,179 cases up to January 1, 1938. More than 3,000,000 workers were involved. In this period, the board closed 7,760 cases and of this number 4,440 were closed by *agreement of both parties*. The

board dismissed 1,162 cases and 1,751 were withdrawn. By its action the N. L. R. B. averted 489 threatened strikes and secured the reinstatement of 8,058 workers discharged for union activity.

Such a record speaks for itself, but further proof of the board's soundness comes from the hearings before circuit courts, where the board's orders were substantially or fully upheld in twenty-one out of twenty-four cases. And in no case did the court set aside orders because of defects in the board's procedure! Considering the open shop attitude of some judges and the legal talent employers have engaged, this vindication of the N. L. R. B. is all the more decisive.

Since the first aggrieved worker found courage to take his case to a Labor Board office in the fall of 1935, there has been an average of fifteen cases filed with the Board every working day. Sixty-five per cent were charges of unfair labor practice. Thirty-five per cent were petitions that the Board, by certification or by elections, should determine the free choice of the workers for representatives in collective bargaining.

Among those eleven thousand cases appear the names of America's great corporations. Although the constitutionality of the Act and its procedure was under attack, the Board during its first year called before it the corporations maintaining the oldest established company unions. Detailed hearings were held in the cases of Carnegie Illinois Steel Corporation, International Harvester Company, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company — each possessed of a seemingly invulnerable employee representation plan. These hearings were concluded before the validation of the Act on April 12, 1937. Within a month afterward each of the employee representation plans was dissolved. In the case of Carnegie-Illinois this led directly to the recognition by United States Steel of the C. I. O.

There has been scant recognition of the courage shown by the Board during its first eighteen months. A more easily discouraged agency might have trod water during that period when employers harassed and disobeyed the Board out of their trust in the infallibility of the fifty-eight Liberty League lawyers who told them on September 10, 1935, that they need never fear that this Act would

be upheld by the Supreme Court. Instead of marking time, the Board went after each case as though no cloud lay over its jurisdiction. In spite of injunctions against its hearings, in the face of open employer contempt, it built the records of unfair labor practices for which employers would eventually have to answer. It established legal precedence so that, when validation finally came, it was a fully equipped, experienced agency, ready to enforce a living Act.

These are some of the antagonists of organized labor with whom the Labor Board came to grips: Republic Steel, Inland Steel, Bethlehem Steel, Weirton Steel, Crucible Steel, International Mercantile Marine, William Randolph Hearst, Mackay Radio and Telegraph Company, Pacific Greyhound Lines, Remington Rand, Standard Oil, Aluminum Company of America, Associated Press, Duplex Printing Press Company, Bradley Lumber Company, Oregon Worsted Company, and Henry Ford.

On April 12, 1937, the National Labor Relations Board was adjudged constitutional by the Supreme Court. The Wagner Act, which created this board, had but one purpose: to make the employer enter into bona fide collective bargaining with his workers and to keep him from interfering with their organization.

For a century the courts of the land have recorded the right of labor to join unions and to bargain collectively with their employers; but not until the President signed the Wagner Act in 1935, did federal law uphold this right. So determined were the open shop employers to crush labor that federal legislation had to be enacted at this late date to assure the workers their elementary constitutional right, but every hearing of the National Labor Relations Board reveals how necessary this legislation is.

Inevitably the Wagner Act was drawn to afford workers protection against the ruthless tactics that employers have used to keep the open shop. Through debates that extended over sixteen months during two sessions of Congress, more than two hundred witnesses were called and 2,285 printed pages of testimony were heard before the law was passed. Few pieces of legislation have been studied

more carefully. As a result of this study the Wagner Act forbids five unfair practices in labor relations:

1. Employers are prohibited from interfering with workers who wish to join labor organizations and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. Such interference may include: advice by foremen not to join a union; the use of spies to report on union activity; direct employer influence against unions; hiring thugs to beat up union members.

2. The Act makes it unfair for an employer to dominate, interfere with, or contribute financial support to an organization of his employees. Thus in effect the formation of company unions is considered an unfair practice.

3. It is unfair for an employer to discriminate in any way against a worker by reason of his membership or activity in a union.

4. The law declares it an unfair practice to discharge or discriminate against an employee because he has filed charges or given testimony under this Act.

5. It is unfair for an employer to refuse to bargain collectively with his employees. In those cases where an employer has pretended to bargain without engaging in a real discussion, the Board has ruled that such action constitutes a refusal to bargain.

The employer retains his right to discharge an employee for just cause — disobedience, bad work, carelessness, drinking on duty, etc.

With all the agitation about the unfairness of the Act, one should remember that the National Labor Relations Board does not in any way defend the workers' claims to higher wages, better working conditions, or any other thing he may demand. The Act merely defends the worker's right to bargain or negotiate about his demands with his employer, and to do this through his elected bargaining agency — in other words, the union of his choosing.

By far the greater number of cases are withdrawn or settled without a hearing. During the first year these informal conferences were going on all the time and untold friction, grief, and strikes were

avoided simply because there is now a meeting place which has the power and the sanction of the Federal Government behind it.

In every one of the twenty-two regional offices, scenes like the following are being enacted every day: There is trouble, threat of a strike. The workers have made complaints. A group of the workers comes in and confers. A group of the employers confers. They state informally what they will or will not do to iron out the difficulty. The local regional director meets with both sides, asks questions, explains the position of the workers to the employers and the position of the employers to the workers. Finally, there is a meeting of both groups. Perhaps the workers' bargaining agent is a C. I. O. organizer in a region where the employers have been propagandized to look upon the C. I. O. as the "red menace of Moscow." Now the two groups meet. The employers are astonished to find that the workers' representative, the C. I. O. organizer, is a workman like those in his shop — that he is a reasonable fellow to whom a man can talk.

Each side states its views before the other to the regional director. One side may withdraw for conference and in the end the difficulty is ironed out and an agreement arrived at. Both sides have had a chance to gauge each other's qualities. At many of these conferences prejudices are dropped on the way. The intolerance of the employee to the employer and the employer to the worker has been thrown overboard. These everyday occurrences the public doesn't hear about. It is the old story again of quiet organizing never making the newspapers, while street fighting is blazed across the country in headlines.

There have been literally hundreds of cases of stubborn employers who have repeatedly refused to meet the representatives of their employees and who, under federal law and with this common meeting ground of the regional office, have come to a better understanding with their workers.

This is how the Act works. If a worker, or the union, thinks that unfair labor practices have been used, that a man has been fired for



union activities or victimized by any of the other practices within the scope of the Act, a charge can be filed with the regional director of the Board. Such charges must be sworn before a notary public and before an agent of the Board. After an investigation, if the director believes the charges have a foundation, he will summon both parties to an open hearing. The trial examiner before whom the hearing is held will be chosen by the Board in Washington. The trial examiner may dismiss the case or recommend to the employer to comply with the law.

As we have seen, the meeting of workers and employers under the Board's impartial auspices serves to iron out the vast majority of their differences. If this first hearing fails to end the dispute and the employer will not comply with the provisions of the Act, the trial examiner's report is sent to the Washington office, where the Board renders a decision upon the entire record. If the employer still refuses to comply, the case may go to the circuit court of appeals. It is within the power of the court to dismiss, modify, or uphold the decision. If the decision is upheld by the circuit court, the employer must comply or be held in contempt of court.

Certainly there is nothing dictatorial in this procedure. It is squarely in line with democratic tendencies at work in America today. Nevertheless, this law, which was enacted in the interests of industrial peace for the express purpose of removing one of the most important causes of strikes, lockouts, lost work days and interrupted production, has met with a storm of opposition. And, as might be expected, the criticism has come mainly from the same open shop forces that fought the law's enactment and tried desperately to block any appropriations for its enforcement. The National Association of Manufacturers, Chamber of Commerce lobbies and other employer groups have joined anti-Administration forces in charging that the law is unfair. Senators Nye and Vandenberg, General Johnson and Representative Clare Hoffman have lent their voices to the Tory chorus of complaint.

The reason for this attack from all sides on the National Labor



Relations Board law, for obscuring its purposes and functions, for ignoring the valuable role which it has played in the interests of industrial peace, are not far to seek.

In the Board hearings the picture of employer violence and foul play is exposed to public view. For the first time in the history of labor, the public learns that a company employs hatchet gangs to beat up its workers. It learns that the pleasant and benevolent fancier of folk dances, old Mr. Ford, employs spies, plug-uglies and strong-arm men to beat up and terrorize anyone who dares to speak of unions. The Republic Steel mills' actions against its workers in Massillon are described in relentless questions and answers. All the meannesses and skull-duggeries of the employers come out in these hearings: their use of spies and of strikebreakers, their suborning of public officials. The sub rosa relationship of public official and mill owner is exposed, and what happens when thugs and deputies are set upon the workers is seen. An ugly, vicious story unfolds itself.

Naturally the employers want the teeth taken out of this law before any more such revelations are made about the doings of foremen or hatchet gangs, or the thugs employed in the Good-year Plant in Gadsden, Alabama, or before any more such judgments are rendered as were rendered against James H. Rand Jr., that brilliant young employer who devised the best strike-breaking plan yet known, the Mohawk Valley Formula. They want this done before any more is told the public about the brutalities of Henry Ford's service men.

The attacks on the Board made on Capitol Hill have shown a curiously adept timing. Congressman Rankin launched his tirade in August, 1937, at exactly the moment when Congress was considering an appropriation of funds to allow the Board to handle the greatly increased burden of work which the validation of the Act had placed upon it.

In January, 1938, again when the Board's appropriation was pending in the Senate, Senator Burke tried to persuade the Senate

Judiciary Committee to investigate the Board's supposed misdeeds. With the fanfare of newspaper publicity Burke read twenty-three pages of misstatements, rumors, and unsubstantiated allegations which had been supplied him for some months previously by all those who wished to hamstring the Board. The investigation, as the *Philadelphia Record* said, "blew up in Burke's face." It required only one day's appearance for Chairman Madden to refute Burke's charges. At the end of the hearing Burke, no longer with any heart for his work, was carrying his fight in the face of opposition from members of his own Committee. A week later the Committee shelved the entire proceedings. In all this Burke performed a service to the Board. For the first time the Board's record, described at the hearing by Senator Thomas as "almost too good to be true" was given some public display.

Through its hearings and the brief accounts of them which appear in the daily press, the N. L. R. B. is gradually making the public aware of what has happened to workers in the past and what pressures are still put upon them when they seek to bargain collectively with employers who are committed to the open shop.

Not only fear of exposure but a long-standing hatred of unions drives these open shop groups to attack the N. L. R. B., for undoubtedly the Board in its workings has been a powerful stimulus to labor organization because it promised an end of unfair practices which were aimed exclusively at crushing labor. Because this powerful impetus coincided with the tremendous growth of the C. I. O., which was sweeping the country, the Board has been accused of partiality by former liberals and A. F. of L. chiefs alike.

By reason of its greater vigor and widespread appeal the C. I. O. has gained more than its rival through the N. L. R. B. Even after the A. F. of L. sent out some two hundred additional organizers, the C. I. O. continued to win a large majority of elections held under the N. L. R. B. to determine the agency for collective bargaining. And very often, to excuse their own failure, the A. F. of L. organizers called the Board's elections unfair.

Thus the C. I. O. could report at its Atlantic City conference that it had won 108 out of 133 elections in which the A. F. of L. appeared against it on the ballot. In number of votes cast the story was the same, the C. I. O. receiving 22,641 (76 per cent) out of a total of 29,564 in elections where C. I. O. and A. F. of L. unions opposed each other on the ballot. As such results came in, A. F. of L. leaders showed a growing dislike for the Labor Board's elections.

But there is still another aspect of the controversy now raging around the Wagner Act. This is labor's new reliance upon government and legislation to help win its rightful place in the nation's economic and political structure. While this changed attitude became most apparent under Roosevelt's administration, it was foreshadowed by earlier events. In 1926 the Railway Act set up a National Mediation Board which has been highly successful in dealing with disputes between management and labor. The Norris-La Guardia anti-injunction bill, the Walsh-Healy Act and the Guffey Act, as well as the Social Security laws and the projected wages-and-hours bill, all spring from this extended relationship between government and labor. The old system which made law enforcement exclusively an engine with which to repress workers is slowly breaking down. The N. L. R. B. in its functioning has reflected this changed moral climate.

Like the La Follette Committee, the N. L. R. B. is part of an awakening social sense. Its disclosures are a wholesome antidote for the long-sustained propaganda of employer groups. Hearing after hearing has shown that workers, far from provoking violence, are themselves its victims, and that this violence is organized and paid for by open shop employers as a fixed labor policy. By exposing these practices the National Labor Relations Board not only helps to correct an old imbalance between workers and their employers, but it performs an important educational function as well. It makes clearer to a still confused middle class the problems that labor has faced in its bitter struggle for industrial democracy.

## THE N. L. R. B. REMINGTON RAND HEARING

The Remington Rand Company manufactures typewriters, adding machines, and office equipment distributed by 235 sales offices and 8,500 independent dealers to a world-wide market. There are 3,200 salesmen for its product in the domestic market. Practically all its manufacturing products are shipped in interstate commerce, and its incoming shipments of materials are drawn from many states.

On May 26, 1936, the Remington Rand employees went on strike in six cities. There were 6,000 of them. The Board found that the strike was the result of Rand's deliberate efforts to avoid a conference with the union, the strike being called after the union had repeatedly attempted to obtain a conference with Rand or a responsible official of the company.

The Board in its decision treats at length certain aspects of strikebreaking that occurred at those plants. It describes Rand's device of deliberately provoking disorder at the Tonawanda plant so that he could photograph it and use the pictures to obtain an injunction against the union members based upon their supposed violence. For that purpose Rand had over seventy-five of Bergoff's "plug-uglies" attempt to march into the plant under conditions calculated to induce the strikers to resist them, which they did by throwing stones and engaging in hand-to-hand combat.

Bergoff himself gave a full description of this episode:

He, Rand, said he had a great many loyal employees that wanted to return to work and he would like to have these people go there as though they were seeking work. . . . I do not know, Rand kind of put it over on me — between you and I, I did not know there were quite so many bricks in Tonawanda. He even wanted me to send some of the women and I was glad I didn't afterwards, and so was he. . . .

I met Rand in the plant about an hour or two afterwards. He had been taking pictures, moving pictures, and I really

believe it was a very good stunt on Rand's part because he took some pictures there showing how my men were showered with bricks . . . to be used in the newspapers, showing the strikers throwing stones at the men that were trying to enter the plant. . . . Naturally he had them published showing peaceful pickets, America, a free land, all that stuff. Naturally it wasn't bad stuff, because those peaceful pickets were certainly raising the devil.

I was sore as the devil at Rand. In fact I had a hell of an argument with him . . . and said "If you were going to pull a stunt off like this, why didn't you let me know. Some of my men might have gotten killed up there. . . . It is a good thing we didn't bring the women along." He laughed.

Trial Examiner Wood: Were you accusing Rand of staging this thing?

Bergoff: I did, to tell you the honest truth.

The decision states further:

In the planning of these disorders, the respondent exhibited the small value it placed on human life, for with even-handedness it stood willing to sacrifice the lives of the men whom it hired to break the strike as well as those of the strikers. Likewise, in having its agents commit acts of violence in such a fashion as to ascribe the guilt to the strikers and its deliberate provocation of disorders by the strikers, it was not deterred by the knowledge that innocent men would be arrested and fined, that a citizenry, made almost hysterical through the respondent's subtle playing on its emotions and thoughts, would inflict excessive punishment upon men acting under infuriating provocation. Nor did the respondent stop at making dupes of the civil authorities or the leading citizens, as at Ilion, so that they would do the job for the respondent.

The events at Middletown are likewise related in detail, the

decision stating that the company's activities to break the strike there fell into three distinct phases:

The first, an attempt on the part of the respondent to achieve its ends by threatening the community with removal of the plant, the second, a frank abandonment of such threats and an effort to reopen the plant by a respondent-created "back-to-work" movement; the third, the introduction of violence and the reopening of the plant by a combination of strikebreakers and State police. Concurrent with all three phases was an unscrupulous publicity campaign designed to turn public opinion against the strikers.

In regard to the violence at Middletown the Board stated that the company deliberately set in motion a train of events that could end only in violence and that the record indicated that much of the violence blamed on the union was directly committed by agents of the company. One of the provocative acts was committed by Rand himself who, in an automobile being driven up and down the picket line, was engaged in "deliberately thumbing his nose at the group of pickets."

Concluding its findings, the Board stated:

From the thousands of pages of testimony in this proceeding there may be distilled two very plain facts: the unwavering refusal of the respondent to bargain collectively with its employees and the cold, deliberate ruthlessness with which it fought the strike which its refusal to bargain had precipitated. If the provisions of the Act ever required justification, one need go no further than the facts of this case. Over 6,000 employees, with their families and dependents, are subjected to the miseries of a prolonged strike, the people of six communities experience the economic hardships that inevitably result when an accustomed source of income is suddenly withdrawn, these same communities are turned into warring camps and unreasoning hatreds are created that lead to abuses alien to a sane civilization — all because the respondent refused to rec-



ognize the rights of six thousand employees. A decent respect for the rights of human beings demands that no employer be free to ignore his employees in such fashion, but that, as provided by the Act, they be entitled through the procedure of collective bargaining to have a voice in shaping their destinies. . . .

## XXIV. The La Follette Committee

THE La Follette Civil Liberties Committee was formed, after the passage of the Wagner Act, to make an investigation of "the violations of the rights of free speech and assembly and undue interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively." It was given a small appropriation of \$15,000.

The Committee has exposed the perpetual underground warfare which the open shop employer wages against the elementary civil rights of his workers — rights now incorporated in federal law. What has been revealed is so amazing that one is apt to lose sight of the fact that the surface of the situation has only been scratched. Labor espionage, the purchase of munitions and tear gas with which to maim and kill workers, the use of company police, deputies and armed strikebreakers for the same purpose, go on unchecked.

Into the Senate office room before Senator La Follette and Senator Thomas streams a procession of reluctant and frequently dishonest witnesses. From their mutilated and incomplete records was pieced together the partial story of undercover and terrorist methods that have supported the open shop. The list of 2,500 implicated firms "reads like a blue-book of American industry" (the words of the committee). Here John W. Young, president of Federal Laboratories, Inc., finally admitted that "ink eradicator had been applied to his ledgers in an effort to conceal the fact that one principal sales outlet for his arms (and tear gas) was the Railway Audit & Inspection Co., which also supplied the finks and strikebreakers to use them."

Here was unfolded the union-smashing technique of Pinkerton's

1,228 identified spies, 304 of whom belonged to unions, 100 holding positions as responsible union officials.

Here Paul Litchfield, president of Goodyear Rubber, squirmed and vainly tried to deny that he knew the Akron Employers Association used spies extensively. On the same rostrum detective agency heads were forced to corroborate the testimony of their own "hookers" who told of entrapping union men desperately in need of money. Letters and oral witnesses described spy operations carried on by the National Metal Trades Association in bitter and violent war against the unions.

Here document after document revealed a cynical and nationwide plot to evade or defy the Federal law through provocateurs. As the Committee Report states:

They seek to discredit the union by attempting to associate it with violence and sabotage. A Corporations Auxiliary Co. spy sat in the meetings of the strike strategy committee of the Dodge Local of the United Automobile Workers in 1936 and urged the use of force and violence. A Pinkerton spy in the International Association of Machinists in Atlanta sought to provoke a general strike. A National Metal Trades spy in the Black & Decker strike at Kent, Ohio, in 1936, urged his fellow unionists to dynamite the plant.

Here were disclosed facts which prompted the Committee to say:

It is therefore important to stress that these are the methods, not of criminals and sadists, but of employers high in the esteem of the Nation, possessing wealth and power over millions of men and women; and that these practices are not the sporadic excesses of mismanagement, but rather the chosen instruments of a deliberate design to thwart the concrete expression of the right of collective action by individual workers who, without that right, have no rights.

Yet this is only a beginning in the exposure of what lies beneath the innocent-sounding name of the "open shop."

In the sessions which ended in the summer of 1937, four of the great detective agencies were called before the Board. These were: Railway Audit & Inspection Co.; Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, Inc.; Corporations Auxiliary Co.; and the William J. Burns International Detective Agency.

Pinkerton defied the Board. All the others obstructed the inquiry as far as was in their power. They were able to do this because it is probable that a majority of our Senators are cool to the investigation. Pinkerton, under advice of counsel, refused to answer questions. His lawyers were Cravath, DeGersdoff, Swaine and Wood, and here we meet again the same firm who helped put the N. R. A. out of business. They are the backbone of the Liberty League.

We do not yet know precisely who bought the espionage, or just how the munitions were bought. Of the great business names only Paul Litchfield of Goodyear Rubber Company and E. T. Cunningham of RCA appeared. There seems to be a limit to governmental authorities, tackling such ticklish things as espionage, armed strikebreaking, munitioning of plants, and the deputy sheriff system. And these limitations spring from the close relation of big business to the legislators themselves who are called upon to investigate the practices of their own world.

It should be possible to call before the Board the great purchasers of munitions and tear gas for industrial plants and the great employers of espionage, and to find out if any legislative process can be followed to keep arms, rifles, and gas out of the plants.

Still to be investigated are the private detective agencies and the spy systems which are directly maintained by employers or groups of employers cooperating together. These "private police" are more powerful and less subject to legal control than professional agencies and they frequently dominate all working conditions in a company town. Forced trading at company stores and even the intimidation of grand jurors are not unusual by-products of this system.

The real connection between the police and the munitions concerns is yet to be investigated. There was much evidence before the

committee that police and private employers cooperated in buying arms and gas. The Bureau of Internal Revenue had occasion to look into the purchase of four machine guns through the West Point, Georgia, police. These guns were paid for by the West Point Manufacturing Co. and loaned to other employers.

At Massillon, Ohio, two workers were killed and scores were wounded by arms supplied to hand-picked deputies by Republic Steel. In the face of strong opposition from Chief of Police Switter, Republic furnished sawed-off shotguns and shells, tear gas guns and projectiles. Later, Chief Switter testified before the N. L. R. B., "I said all right, I would appoint the whole damned outfit. I would give them everything they wanted. I could see there would be a battle and bloodshed as soon as they put guns in those rookies' hands."

Something more is known about how munitions are sold. Mr. Ignatius McCarthy, San Francisco drummer for the Lake Erie Chemical Co., writing almost daily to the home office, gives a remarkable picture of his sales efforts. During a California cannery strike he reported:

I have orders on my desk right now for sheriffs' and chiefs' friends who have held up their purchases for thirty days in an effort to give me the business, but gradually have had to give Federal the business on account of pressure of bankers and others that they get machine guns for protection. Every village here has gone gun-crazy, and the only way gas can be sold now in the future (sic) will be with machine guns. [Mr. McCarthy did not handle machine guns, but he obviously kept busy.] I have about eight or ten invitations a month to speak at various clubs, lodges and even high schools, but I only take those engagements I can't very well get out of taking. Near the end of the month I must talk before a large gathering of Odd Fellows at Stockton. You have to do a lot of things out here to sell gas.

[Mr. McCarthy stood ready to do whatever was needful.]

I have a few remarks to make (to local police) at the beginning to the effect that our whole desire is to cooperate . . . but that the only way I can take active part in any riots is as a special officer or deputy sheriff and not as a representative of the company. This is a crack at Quinn who allowed Rausch [a rival salesman] to shoot at will without any control. Rausch shot a fellow in the face with a long-range shell (gas) and then asked the officers witnessing the same not to say he did it. I was on the waterfront as a special police officer. . . . You might as well insist on this policy in other parts of the country.

[In another letter to the home office McCarthy gives some interesting instructions.] Herewith special information on the orders: No. 316 — This was a present to the highway patrol from the growers' secret fund. They want the check cashed personally by some one and not cashed by the Lake Erie Chemical Co. . . . It is important that this procedure be carried out if we want any further business with them.

[There were rival concerns in the field, notably Federal Laboratories Inc., and Mr. McCarthy's correspondence shows them at work on San Francisco's waterfront.] The Federal man appeared on the front with a machine load of ammunition and guns and passed a lot out one day to various cops. . . . Federal's men shot dozens of long-range shells aimlessly and without effect. . . . I then fired a shell in the same direction asking the reporters and Federal's assistants (the two cops) to watch a real shell in action. Our shell having a longer range went over the head of the man who picked up Federal's shell and landed about a hundred feet behind him but directly in front of the mob. Another member, thinking it was the same type, stooped to pick it up when it exploded in his face scattering the mob in consternation. [Incidentally, this particular letter was addressed to B. C. Goss, president of Lake Erie Chemical, who had reproved McCarthy for not getting enough orders.]



Yet McCarthy scoured the country, driving six or seven hundred miles each week, hunting for strike scares, contacting police and employers in a frantic search for business.

The La Follette Committee has stated that industry bought over \$450,000 worth of gas in the years 1933 to 1936. During the months of May and June, 1937, steel companies in the strike area invested nearly half a million dollars in gas and munitions. Moreover, known locations of machine guns sold and supplies of gas coincide closely on the map with heavy concentrations in industrial centers of population. And the Committee makes this pertinent observation: "The size of private stocks of munitions is no indication of their effectiveness in the intimidation of striking workers, since only one side is armed. *Workers do not buy either armaments or gas . . .*"

Like Mr. McCarthy's trade, industrial espionage and strike-breaking thrive on industrial strife. In the years when unions were making a concerted drive under the N. I. R. A. and the Wagner Act, the net income of the Pinkerton Agency jumped from \$76,760 in 1933 to \$268,703 in 1934 and \$243,351 in 1935. General Motors Corporation and its subsidiaries paid this firm \$167,586 in 1935.

Doing double service as spies and strikebreakers, the detective agencies find an alarmist technique highly profitable. Even employers who do not anticipate trouble with their workers have been frightened into buying protection. A partial list of the firms served by Pinkerton includes ninety names such as Bethlehem Steel Co., Radio Corporation of America, Campbell Soup Co., Montgomery Ward & Co., and the Pennsylvania Railroad Co.

Since 1933 the National Corporation Service has been in the employ of 142 known industrial clients, including such firms as Otis Steel, Midland Steel, Wheeling Steel Co., Hazel Atlas Glass, the Goodrich Rubber Co., and Fostoria Glass.

Railway Audit & Inspection Co., whose records were mutilated, is known from various authenticated sources to have serviced sixty-seven companies, including the Aluminum Co. of America, the Borden Milk Co., the Consolidated Gas Co. of New York,

Frigidaire Corporation, Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, and H. C. Frick Coal and Coke Co., both subsidiaries of United States Steel, Kelvinator Sales Corporation, National Dairy Products, Truscon Steel, Western Union, Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Co., Woodward Iron & Coal Co., and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The operative (stool pigeon) has several qualifications which make him useful to the agency and the employer. C. M. (Red) Kuhl, strikebreaker and hooker with twenty years' experience, testified:

Well, first you look your prospect over and if he is married, that is preferable. If he is financially hard up, that is number two. If his wife wants more money or he hasn't got a car, that all counts.

The next step is to try to relieve employer, agency, and the perpetrator, of responsibility for damage done to person or property. It would appear that Mr. McCarthy's method is used; dangerous and questionable persons are deputized as officers of the law. The quoted letter continues:

We (R. A. and I.) would not take over the job unless we secured for our men deputization by the local police or the sheriff. If you run into a strike job, tell the president or the owner of the mill that we will not handle the matter unless we secure the help and assistance of the local sheriff as well as his cooperation. It is dangerous to do otherwise.

A Chicago guard, who took twenty-one armed men from New Orleans to Lake Charles to operate against a longshoremen's strike, testified that he "and these men were all sworn in by the harbor and terminal police of the State." Although on private payrolls, accepting employer's money through the agency, and although taking orders from both employer and agency, they wear the authority of the State.

Since violence means more business, it is not unusual to find these

agents deliberately provoking it, either by posing as troublesome strikers or by goading those on strike to defensive tactics that are made to look like an attack. The personnel selected for this sort of "service" cannot be distinguished from the second-rate gangster.

Drawn from the underworld, a large number of these men have criminal records. An interesting example is Sam Cohen, alias Sam Goldberg, alias Chowderhead Cohen, alias Charles Harris, who testified before the committee. His preparatory work in industrial relations included a term in Atlanta for conspiracy, four years in state prison and four years in Sing Sing for burglaries, and detention as a material witness in a notorious murder case. Out of thirteen strikebreakers furnished by Railway Audit & Inspection for the General Motors strike in St. Louis in 1932, seven were wanted by the police of other cities on charges including burglary, forgery, larceny, inciting to riot, and assault. A large proportion of the strikebreakers furnished to the Pioneer Paper Stock Co. of Philadelphia by Mickey Martel, a character known to the police, turned out to have police records. The list reads similarly to its end and is duplicated in other instances when the authorities have made the effort to learn the character of men brought in by employers, allegedly to keep the peace.

These men are sent by train or car to the strike scene, sometimes long distances. The Byrnes law, which went into effect in June, 1936, made it a felony to transport men across state lines with the intent to employ them to interfere with peaceful picketing. The La Follette Committee report makes plain the unholy community of interest which prompts both employer and agency to foment trouble:

It is being developed that employer and agency have two separate vested interests in violence. The agency's interest in violence, and that of the strikebreaker's, is that it will prolong and embitter the fight so that a stronger guard will be called out and more money expended through the agency. The em-

ployer's interest in violence is that it shall, by being attributed to the workers, bring discredit to them, thus alienating public sympathy for their cause. In those States where anti-picketing injunctions are still freely served, violence is provoked in order to obtain an injunction against the strikers.

Despite the shocking nature of its disclosures the La Follette Committee has by no means covered all the dark alleys and extra-legal employer tactics that abridge workers' civil rights, prevent union organization and spread violence along the industrial front. Indeed, the findings to date leave the full scope of these activities a mystery, and some of them have scarcely been examined at all.

Have the states endeavored to control these instruments of industrial warfare and has this control been successful? Is there need for federal regulation of these practices and, if so, is there a basis for effective regulation within the framework of federal power? These are questions posed by the Committee. They remain largely unanswered.

It is an encouraging sign, however, that the Committee now proposes to examine the practices and procedures of the National Association of Manufacturers as they affect civil rights. Despite its power and prestige, the tactics of the N. A. M. should prove a fruitful field, for the Senate Committee is the most powerful investigating force in the world. The parliamentary powers of the U. S. Senate are the most drastic and tremendous engine of investigation which exists today.

This body, if it chooses, can uncover the whole area of vigilantism, the labor spy and munitions rackets, the collusion between employers and officers charged with law enforcement. It should be able to segregate potential fascist groups in employer associations and call them before the Board. It should amass evidence which would:

1. Pass legislation to get munitions and gas out of factories.
2. Stop completely any financial connection between the police

and the mills, such as was proved at Crown Point and Republic Steel.

3. Change the deputy system.
4. Make public the spy employers and the names of spies, and pass laws which should cover armed strikebreakers and espionage.

## XXV. A. F. of L. and C. I. O.

LABOR'S GAINS have been listed. The failure of the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. to come to an accord in this critical time is the greatest menace confronting the workers. After two months of negotiations, the efforts for peace between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. bogged down, with each side blaming the other. Philip Murray, Chairman of the C. I. O., stated, "We offered them our entire membership. They refused to take them. The onus must be placed on the leadership of the A. F. of L."

There has been both confusion and a sharp difference of opinion over this issue. David Dubinsky of the I. L. G. W. U. has strongly intimated that the C. I. O. was at fault in the collapse of the "peace talks," whereas Daniel Tobin, president of the Teamsters, charged that the A. F. of L. was responsible. Most progressive labor leaders and unions, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers being an example, share Mr. Tobin's view.

The A. F. of L. offered to take back ten unions and wanted all the other twenty-two national and international unions to adjust their differences separately. This looked to the C. I. O. like a polite way of saying that these unions were to be dismembered and parcelled out among the craft unions.

In examining the bitter differences that have grown out of this split two facts should be borne in mind. First, the A. F. of L. rank and file, composed of sound trade unionists, did not seek this division of labor's forces; rather these millions of workers followed the dictates of their own leaders. Second, with few exceptions these leaders were acting sincerely in what they believed to be the best interests of organized labor. Just as many confirmed Republicans



fought Roosevelt because they believed that the New Deal's policies were ruinous. Such convictions, however mistaken, make adjustments doubly difficult.

All hopes for immediate peace were killed by the action of the executive committee in Miami, February, 1938, when John Lewis' reiterated peace offer was refused and the U. M. W. A., the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, and the Flat Glass Workers Unions were expelled from the American Federation of Labor.

At this time when peace negotiations have failed, it is necessary to look closer at the relations of the A. F. of L. with the C. I. O. A study of the rise of the various unions discloses an almost invariable pattern. During the N. R. A. days, when union membership was stimulated by Section 7A, independent unions formed all over the country within the mass industries. Invariably they took the industrial form. As they strove to affiliate with the A. F. of L. they were frequently raided by craft unions, their original impulse to organize came to nothing and their union membership rapidly fell away. Other unions, like the Woodworkers or the Electrical Workers, who did affiliate with the A. F. of L. were given B ratings. That is to say, that while living history was proving every day to the A. F. of L. that craft unionism was inadequate, the members of the executive council ignored history's lesson. The persistency with which the A. F. of L. snubbed new membership and refused to give new unions international charters, indicates that the old bureaucracy of the Federation did not want a large new membership because it feared for its own power should it include extensive new membership to its councils. Apparently the final refusal to admit the four million members of the C. I. O. was based on a similar fear. In this A. F. of L. leaders are in no way singular. All groups in power seek to perpetuate themselves.

We have already seen the attempts which forward looking A. F. of L. unions made to profit by the lessons of history and to fulfill the perennial demand of the membership to organize the unorganized. After a three-year fruitless attempt to galvanize the

executive council into action, the C. I. O. was formed on November 9, 1935, announcing its purpose as follows:

To encourage and promote organization of the workers in the mass production and unorganized industries of the nation and affiliated with the A. F. of L. Its functions will be educational and advisory, and the committee and its representatives will cooperate for the recognition and acceptance of modern collective bargaining in such industries.

In the light of events, the various acts against the C. I. O. grow more and more unrealistic. We see these aging men, who had failed to recognize that they were living in a different world from that in which the A. F. of L. was founded, trying ineffectually to stem the new movement which proceeded on its triumphant way, gathering in its hundreds of thousands.

The executive council acted soon after the formation of the C. I. O. At the meeting of the council, November 26, 1935, it condemned the C. I. O. and expressed the unalterable opinion, which Frey had stated at the convention, that craft unionism fulfilled all of labor's needs. The council also refused an industrial charter to the radio and electrical workers, as it had, at different times, refused industrial charters to the cement workers and other workers in mass industries.

In their convention the United Mine Workers of America voted to withhold their per capita from the A. F. of L. and endorsed their affiliation with the C. I. O. in spite of an impassioned appeal from William Green.

On December 5, the C. I. O. sent copies of the minority convention report to unions and central labor councils all over the country. John L. Lewis offered in a public letter to William Green to yield him the chairmanship of the C. I. O. He recalled to Green his former allegiance to industrial unionism, in which Green had stated, "The advantage of such a form of organization is so obvious that one can scarcely conceive of any opposition thereto."

"Why not return to your Father's house?" Lewis urged Green in

the open letter. "You will be welcome. If you care to dissociate yourself from your present position, the Committee for Industrial Organization will be happy to make you its chairman in my stead. The honorarium will be equal to that which you now receive, the position will be as permanent as the one you occupy."

On February 20, 1936, President Green sent a warning against any affiliation with the C. I. O. to 1,354 local and federal unions, 49 state federations of labor and 730 central labor councils.

When Michael Tighe, President of the Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, after flirtation with both sides, accepted the C. I. O. offer to organize the steel workers, the executive council addressed another letter to the C. I. O. on May 26, giving them two weeks in which to disband and ordering the unions to appear on June 7 before them to answer charges.

By this time the C. I. O. had been joined by the Flat Glass Workers, the Electrical Workers, the United Auto Workers and the Rubber Workers. The C. I. O. unions did not appear and Colonel J. P. Frey asked for the suspension of the C. I. O. The Council now ordered the twelve unions to appear for trial on August 3. Again the C. I. O. unions didn't appear and the executive council voted to suspend them, the order to go into effect on September 5, 1936.

When the executive council expelled the C. I. O. unions, their friends contended it had committed an unconstitutional act, since authority to expel unions rests with the convention alone. When Lewis made a counter-suggestion that the suspension order be lifted and that all the unions attend the convention and abide by the majority decision, the executive council refused Lewis' offer.

Apparently a substantial part of the A. F. of L. membership shared John L. Lewis' view that this was an act of incredible and crass stupidity. For the A. F. of L. headquarters was stormed with telegrams from three internationals, four state federations, and from innumerable local unions protesting against the suspension. Nevertheless, the action of the executive council was upheld at the Tampa A. F. of L. convention. A standing committee of

three was appointed to confer at any time with the C. I. O. This committee had no power to make any adjustments. It apparently existed to accept complete capitulation of the C. I. O. Commenting upon this committee, in his first press conference at the Tampa convention, William Green stated in a shaking voice, "We have stood with our hands outstretched to them. . . ."

A voice from the rear queried, "Did that hand hold an ax or an olive branch, Mr. Green?"

At a special meeting of the executive council in Cincinnati, on May 25 and 26, 1937, the state and labor councils were instructed to expel the C. I. O. members from central bodies and state federations. The council voted a two cent per capita tax with which to fight the C. I. O.

It remained for the convention at Denver in October, 1937, to express itself freely on the subject of the recalcitrant unions. Never was Mr. Green so spirited as in his opening address and also in his address before the Metal Trades, whose convention, according to custom, preceded that of the A. F. of L. He there declared war upon the C. I. O. and stated that a fighting machine would be created against it such as this country had never seen and that he would "wipe out" the C. I. O.

But it was in the convention resolution blaming the C. I. O. and its leaders that the A. F. of L. rose to new rhetorical heights. Stating that "unity is not only the basis of our strength, it is the very essence of trade unionism which must be preserved at all costs," this resolution found the C. I. O. completely responsible for the lack of unity. Then it recited the long-suffering actions of the A. F. of L. and pictured it as encouraging industrial unionism. Next came the now famous blast against the C. I. O. leadership:

We find on the one hand, the dominating and fulminating Caesar of the C. I. O. marching his Roman legions to the White House with bludgeoning threats, while on the other hand we find the Machiavelli of the same C. I. O. pursuing the methods

typical of that old master of cunning and conniving, working through the catacombs of politics, pouring oil upon the troubled machinery of national politics, so that, where the one smashes through in ruthless effort at conquest, the other follows after with soft words, with the trappings of intellectualism and the tenuous and slithering tactics of the ancient masters of deception and ensnaring. We refer to one called Sidney Hillman.

After this burst of eloquence, the resolution appealed to the rank and file of the C. I. O. over the heads of its leaders. It called upon the United Mine Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, to return to the A. F. of L.

We cannot do otherwise than believe that their great membership wishes above all to be again within the fold of the American Federation of Labor, honored as a part of the American Federation, their rights and liberties respected.

Especially touching was the appeal to the United Textile Workers:

We cannot believe that the membership of the United Textile Workers of America can approve the action, which in their case is peculiarly startling and especially naked in its tempestuous disregard for rights and autonomous self-government. For in this case a treasury was confiscated, a constitution torn to shreds, officers driven to abdicate — a union demolished and made into a vassal province of the Prince Machiavelli who is now its overlord. . . .

With all the facts in mind, and because we believe there is a great rank and file that ardently wishes to return to the fold of the American Federation of Labor, we recommend, first, that our special committee for peaceful negotiations be continued.

Certainly within the ranks of the C. I. O. there has been no inclination to "return to the fold" without positive guarantees that the outworn policies of craft unionism would not be forced upon the new membership.

Moreover the A. F. of L. had sided with the employer against C. I. O. unions. This was especially exemplified by William Green's action during the General Motors strike. His behavior then was ably described by John L. Lewis during the United Auto Workers' convention:

On one side of the table in the little room, in which the Governor of Michigan sat at the head, were the representatives of the United Automobile Workers and the Committee for Industrial Organization, and on the other side of the table were the representatives of the General Motors Corporation, corporation executives, multi-millionaires in their own right, who for days and days and nights and nights had been sitting there saying, "No," "No," "No," to every suggestion of your representatives that an agreement be made.

The passing hours made everyone haggard, and almost drained them of their strength, and at that time and under those circumstances the telephone bell rang, and the Governor of Michigan answered the telephone, and a voice in Washington, D. C., began to talk to the Governor and the voice was none other than the voice of the President of the American Federation of Labor, William Green, and William Green, be it said to his eternal shame, demanded over the long distance telephone in our presence that the Governor of Michigan not permit any agreement to be made in that conference between the United Automobile Workers and the General Motors Corporation.

Again during the steel strike, Mr. Green made a common front with Tom Girdler. He expressed regret that "thousands of workers



were persuaded to sacrifice themselves as victims of ill-advised and untimely strikes," and explained the failure of the steel strike by emphasizing "the violent policies pursued by the C. I. O. in automobiles and steel during the past year."

Early in the dispute of the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., the A. F. of L. stepped out to replace the company unions. In the tri-state district of Oklahoma, Missouri, and Kansas, an area where lead and zinc ore are mined, lead poisoning, silicosis, and tuberculosis kills the miners. The workers live in tumble-down shacks among the piles of chat heaps. Schools as well as homes are built in the valleys between the chat piles and children breathe air heavy with silica dust. Here, when the workers tried to better their condition, the notorious Blue Card Union was formed.

This company union had been set up with the help of the militia. A minor mill official headed it. Workers had been paid ten dollars apiece for leaving the A. F. of L. to join this phony outfit. No workers except those who held the blue card could have jobs. Five thousand miners were thrown out of work. The strike was broken with troops. Strikebreakers and thugs manned the union.

Yet when the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers became a C. I. O. affiliate, this same company union was chartered by the A. F. of L. Given the name of the Tri-State Metal, Mine and Smelter Workers, its members were armed with ax handles with which they attacked and wrecked union locals and beat up scores of union workers.

Again, in East Pittsburgh, the Electrical and Radio Workers had organized 6,200 of the 8,000 Westinghouse employees. Of the old company union, all but sixteen of the fifty-seven officers had gone over to the new C. I. O. union. The A. F. of L. sent in an organizer and gave a charter to the remaining sixteen officers and their small and timid following.

These are only examples of the part played by the A. F. of L. In many cases it has claimed to be the bargaining agency where it did not represent a majority of the workers. In factories where the

C. I. O. was already making good progress and had set up a bona fide union, it would be found that the A. F. of L. had made a contract with the employers. This tactic was used in the Consolidated Edison Company in New York. The A. F. of L. local there had gone over to the C. I. O. in a body, joining the United Electrical and Radio Workers. While the U. E. R. W.'s organizing drive was in progress, the company signed an agreement with the A. F. of L.

I have had many girls tell me that foremen circulated among them and told them to sign up with the A. F. of L. or else. . . .

According to the reports of the N. L. R. B., there have been various occasions when the power has been shut off and employees have been called together to hear speeches by company officials urging them to join the A. F. of L. union. One of the most notorious cases was that of the National Electric Products Company. The United Electrical and Radio Workers had nearly a thousand members out of a total of 1,600 employees, when the company hastily signed a closed shop contract with the A. F. of L. which did not even have an organized local. Not much good came of this because the workers struck in favor of the C. I. O. union. It is said that a great part of the new membership of the A. F. of L. has come through appeals to employers begging preference for the A. F. of L. unions over the "red" C. I. O.

Sixty thousand agricultural workers in California woke up to find themselves in the A. F. of L., having been signed up by Vandeleur, as was so eloquently described by the workers in the Agricultural and Cannery Workers Convention in Denver.

The employers also contacted the A. F. of L., urging them to come in and sign up the workers before the C. I. O. could get there. There are innumerable cases like that of a concern in Toledo in which the company union was no sooner disbanded than it promptly popped up again and was chartered by the A. F. of L. These are merely sample cases. There are many others.

But few could rise to the heights of A. O. Wharton of the Machinists, in the following letter:

LABOR'S NEW MILLIONS  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF MACHINISTS

Washington, D. C.  
April 20, 1937.

GENERAL VICE PRESIDENTS,  
GRAND LODGE REPRESENTATIVES,  
BUSINESS AGENTS AND GENERAL CHAIRMEN.

Dear Sirs and Brothers:

GENERAL

Since the Supreme Court decision upholding the Wagner Labor Act many employers now realize that it is the Law of our Country and they are prepared to deal with labor organizations. These employers have expressed a preference to deal with A. F. of L. organizations rather than Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, Howard and their gang of sluggers, communists, radicals and soap box artists, professional bums, expelled members of labor unions, outright scabs and the Jewish organizations with all their red affiliates.

We have conferred with several such employers and arranged for conferences later when we get the plants organized. The purpose of this is to direct all officers and all representatives to contact employers in your locality as a preliminary to organizing the shops and factories.

With best wishes, I am fraternally yours,

A. O. Wharton,  
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT.

History however will probably judge the American Federation of Labor more severely because it joined with employers in the red-baiting campaign. This has been its principal line of attack. The cry of alien red agitator, which was undoubtedly hoary when the Israelites in Egypt refused to make bricks without straw, has been used by members of the executive council and by William Green.

Up to this time no responsible writer has ventured to call John L. Lewis a Communist. But implications of Moscow control have been frequent. An inaccurate, clever, red-baiting pamphlet called "Join

the C. I. O. and Form a Soviet America," is perhaps the most scurrilous. It was published by the Constitutional Educational League of New Haven — exposed by the La Follette Committee as a red-baiting outfit having nothing to do with the Constitution or education — and was distributed by the thousand in Cleveland during the steel strike. With the exception of old Colonel John Frey, who even his own friends say is hipped about the red scare, and is passing his declining years seeing a Communist behind every tree, every one of the leaders from William Green on were deliberately using the red bogey to discredit the C. I. O.

John L. Lewis' attitude toward the Communists was well known. He expressed it when he answered the question, in an interview, as to whether there were many Communists in the ranks of the C. I. O.

I don't know. There may be some, as there are some Republicans, Presbyterians, Buddhists and Kiwanians. In our movement we have to accept the fact that if men are good enough to work for the corporations, they're good enough to join the C. I. O. We don't turn them upside down and shake the literature out of their pockets. Labor unions are the only voluntary organizations selected by others. Our membership is hand-picked by the employers, so if we get some communists or fascists, we can't help it.

When a worker was a good organizer, no one inquired what his politics and religion were. Anyone who has followed the labor movement dispassionately can testify to the many able organizers and union members among the Communists. As to whether the Communists are dictating the policies of the C. I. O. to John L. Lewis, everyone knows that no outside organization dictates policy to him, either in his own union or in the C. I. O.

These perpetual attacks against Communists have but one aim — to discredit labor unions by using the ever serviceable cry of "Red! Red!" Whether these attacks come from outspoken red-baiters like Girdler, Mayor Hague, Gerald K. Smith, and Representative

Hoffman of Michigan, or from William Green, from newspaper and magazine articles which thinly disguise their purpose under the cloak of being informative, or, more subtly, from "former radicals," the objective is the same however the methods may differ — to make the general public fear the C. I. O.

The Communist point of view as stated by Louis F. Budenz is:

The Committee for Industrial Organization is not a Communist organization. All of Green's efforts to label it as such — following the lead of Weir of Weirton and the other enemies of labor — will fall to the ground. That is said by way of fact, and not of apology.

The Communist Party stands for Socialism.

The Committee for Industrial Organization does not stand for Socialism. It is a trade union movement, which of its very nature at this hour includes American workers of all races, creeds, colors, national origins, and political beliefs. The great bulk of its membership has not yet come to accept Socialism as their goal. Its leader, John L. Lewis, does not stand for Socialism. The Communist Party understands that. And so does William Green.

And William Green also knows that as most of the Communists are workers, there are proportionately as many within the ranks of the American Federation of Labor as there are within the C. I. O. He should know that red-baiting is an employer's tactic, which will help only the employer, and will react on the A. F. of L.

It should be understood that the chartering of company unions of timid workers, or thug unions like that of the blue card, was the action of the small bureaucracy. During these offensives the rank and file of the A. F. of L. continued on many fronts to cooperate with the C. I. O. In the steel strike, all through the Mahoning Valley, the A. F. of L. workers demonstrated their sympathy for the steel strikers. Twice the C. I. O. prevented general strikes of A. F. of L. unions, once in Massillon and again in Warren where fourteen unions came out in protest.

Labor bodies from Seattle to Sacramento on the West Coast, throughout the Middle West into New England, refused to expel C. I. O. unions, though some of them later yielded to A. F. of L. pressure. The same was true within the state federations. Resolutions were adopted at many conventions. In other parts of the country, the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. either cooperated on the labor front as has been described or formed a truce and divided territories between them. In almost all industrial centers, the A. F. of L. rank and file has known that its cause and that of the C. I. O. were one, and has already demonstrated sympathy for the C. I. O. in its strikes just as the C. I. O. has done for the A. F. of L.

We have seen what happened to Beck's teamsters when the subject of their quarrel was explained to them in the Battle of the Sound Trucks. The demand for unity has been persistent and it will grow even louder with the lapse of the peace conference.

Since the suspension of the C. I. O. unions there have been numerous efforts to promote peace. Various organizations have come forth as mediators; plans were made which included Presidential intervention. Taken by surprise in the midst of its red-baiting festival in Denver, the A. F. of L. could scarcely refuse a proposal from the C. I. O. leaders for a peace conference.

The Committee of Ten appointed by the C. I. O. was made up of Philip Murray, Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, Harvey Fremming, James B. Carey, Sherman H. Dalrymple, Homer Martin, Michael Quill, Joseph Curran, and Abram Flaxer. Charles P. Howard, Secretary of the C. I. O. and President of the International Typographical Union, substituted for Sidney Hillman, who was unavoidably absent. The A. F. of L.'s Committee, which they would not enlarge, was composed of Matthew Woll, George Harrison, and George M. Bugnaizet.

A week later when the Committees met again, some progress was made. For a time it seemed as if peace would be inevitable. William Green and John L. Lewis met to discuss the terms. But, although neither of them committed himself as to the nature of their discussions, it was evident before the final parley of the Committee



on December 21, 1937, from statements that both made in public meetings, that they had come to no fundamental agreement. The method of how the C. I. O. unions were to be accepted into the A. F. of L. caused the failure of the peace negotiations.

John L. Lewis, together with his spokesman, insisted that the A. F. of L. must digest all the rival unions and not merely the ten suspended ones, for it seemed easy enough for the A. F. of L. to "swallow" the ten large unions it had first cast from it. By its very acceptance of these unions it admitted that the tragic split in the labor movement had been unnecessary. It had long before disclaimed that the issue was industrial unionism. The end of the peace conference came when John L. Lewis declared that he would not desert any of the twenty unions formed since the original twelve were suspended or had left the Federation. "This would be treason," he said. The A. F. of L. countered that it would be "treason" on their side should they take back these "dual" organizations.

For a time it seemed that some progress toward peace had been made. The very fact that the A. F. of L. was willing to reinstate the original C. I. O. unions showed progress. The analysis made by Matthew Woll indicated that the difficulties in the way of peace were not insuperable. Over only four out of the thirty-two unions concerned was there any serious controversy, he stated. These were the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, the Marine Shipbuilding Workers, State and City Municipal Employees, United Radio & Electrical Workers. Slight, if any, jurisdictional difficulties appeared, according to Mr. Woll, with respect to the others. Yet the fact that the S. W. O. C. was included indicates that the A. F. of L. has not receded from its first position analyzed by *Advance*, organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which states that the A. F. of L. insists on a return to the situation which existed before the formation of the C. I. O.

Yet labor unity can and must be achieved. It can be achieved through increased pressure from the rank and file within the A. F. of L. Peace is important, not only to labor but to the whole country, to employers, and to the general public.

## XXVI. Labor Enters Politics

ALMOST as spectacular as the gains of labor in the field of organization have been its gains in the political field. Labor has been rapidly emerging as a power. The successes of labor in the municipal and county elections from the East to the West in 1937 foreshadows what one may expect in the state elections of 1938.

The old A. F. of L. political slogan, "reward your friends and punish your enemies," failed to protect labor, just as craft unionism failed to organize the mass production industries. Always fearful of direct political commitments, the unions, led first by Gompers and then Green, had confined their activity to intensive lobbying for or against legislation affecting their membership.

Labor's Non-Partisan League was formed in the summer of 1936 for the purpose of helping elect President Roosevelt. Chosen to head the organization were John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers, Sidney Hillman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and George L. Berry, President of the Printing Pressmen's Union. George L. Berry was the first president of the organization and John L. Lewis was chairman of the Executive Board. E. L. Oliver is executive vice-president of the League. The C. I. O. contributed half a million to the Democratic campaign fund.

In New York State, the American Labor Party aligned labor for the same objective. Springing up independently of the Non-Partisan League, the Washington Commonwealth Federation (first called the Commonwealth Builders), appeared on the West Coast with a program of welding together all elements and organizations that supported the New Deal. The formation of these

political groups combining all labor elements yet working for candidates within the two old parties was significant. It marked a recognition of the fact that our political history is strewn with the wreckage of third parties. And in spite of the insistence by all the enemies of labor that John L. Lewis was in the process of forming a new party with himself as candidate for President of the United States, no national third party has been founded by labor as yet.

The League's purpose is simply to serve the interests of labor in politics. Where those interests can best be served by working through the Democratic Party, it will be Democratic. Where those interests can best be served by working through the Republican Party, it will be Republican. Where they can best be served by starting a labor party, it will start a labor party.

The Non-Partisan League and its affiliates, the American Labor Party in New York and its state units in every industrial and several farm states, support the objectives of the New Deal. They emphasize the civil rights of the people as outlined in the Constitution. They are "for the uncompromising preservation of the nation's priceless inheritance as incorporated in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights." They demand full protection of labor's right to organize, its right to bargain collectively, and its right to strike.

Adequate unemployment compensation, adequate old age pensions and adequate insurance against sickness and injury is an important plank. They support other New Deal legislation for labor such as the Child Labor Bill, wage and hour regulations, an adequate relief program, a housing program, a program to conserve national resources. These are the basic demands of labor, adjusted, as in Detroit, to particular instances such as municipal or state ownership of utilities.

Labor's Non-Partisan League began its first campaign in the summer of 1936. The immediate program after the election of President Roosevelt was to put in public office men and women pledged to support the Administration's plans for progressive farm, labor, and social legislation. A national convention of Labor's

Non-Partisan League established a permanent organization with branches in all states. These bid for the active support of progressive labor organizations everywhere. All over the country the American Federation of Labor and the C. I. O. unions generally worked together, even in localities where there was a severe split in the union field.

This was true even on the West Coast where the fight between the two groups has been the most bitter and where the A. F. of L. under the leadership of Dave Beck has promised itself "to push the C. I. O. into the Pacific Ocean." There the recent Commonwealth Federation Convention was attended by 104 delegates from the C. I. O. and 103 delegates from the A. F. of L. The A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. were unable to get together in Detroit in the municipal campaign. The A. F. of L. candidate in the primaries lagged far behind the auto workers' Patrick H. O'Brien. But elsewhere it was almost universally true that in spite of some differences the two groups continued to cooperate in the political field.

Events of the past summer spurred the workers' political drive. Especially was this true in Ohio and Illinois.

The workers saw their efforts to organize, which had only recently been underwritten by the Supreme Court of the United States, everywhere thwarted by city, county, and state officials who in greater or lesser degree were acting as agents of the steel mills. Sometimes, as in Massillon, Ohio, or in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, the mills bought munitions and tear gas and placed them in the hands of policemen and deputies for the purpose of shooting down the workers.

In Chicago, the La Follette investigation exposed the fact that the police actually were being furnished by the mills with tear gas and with hatchet handles. This collusion of police officials and employers for the express purpose of rendering void a federal law and interfering with the workers' constitutional right to organize into unions has never been more clearly shown than in the summer of 1937. These murdered workers, the hundreds of people jailed on framed-up charges, the efforts made to railroad leaders to jail in

many different communities, have all had an electrifying effect upon the workers.

Every one of the eighteen men who was killed has made labor realize that it must organize politically; that there is no use in organizing only in unions; and that unless the laws can be administered by local officials who are not bought by the mills, collective bargaining, insured them by federal law, will be only a farce.

So throughout the country, union halls became the center of political ferment. At headquarters in Washington, every congressman, every senator, every red-baiter, who spoke against the National Labor Relations Act, or attacked labor, was listed. Account was kept of every city, county, and state official who had betrayed his trust and made himself a creature of the employers. The need for labor to enter politics to clear out corrupt officials was imperative.

In the Northwest, where Beck controlled the political machine, Mayor Dore denounced the C. I. O. unions and declared his intention of keeping them out of Seattle.

In Chicago the collusion of the underworld and the police, and the underworld domination of the A. F. of L. have long been known. The Chicago massacre revealed its extent and threw a startling light upon the corruption of city politics.

Van A. Bittner, regional director of the S. W. O. C., speaking before the October conference of the C. I. O., pointed out that the only way the city of Chicago can be delivered from the present dominance of the underworld is through the formation of a strong labor's Non-Partisan League. He declared that only labor could rescue the city from those who now control it. He stated:

Chicago no doubt is controlled by the underworld interests to a greater extent than any other city in America. The gangster influence from the days of Capone and his crowd still prevails not only in the police political department, but in the general life of the citizens of Chicago. As for the trade union movement generally, outside of organizations such as the

Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Ladies Garment Workers, the S. W. O. C. and the Typographical Union and a few others, instead of labor's having any influence on the political life of Chicago, the politicians of Chicago through the underworld control the organized labor movement of that city. To this extent, that when a resolution was prepared and presented to the Chicago Federation of Labor condemning the policies of the mayor for the South Chicago massacre, the chairman of the meeting declared the resolution was out of order because it dealt with people who were killed and belonged to unions affiliated with the C. I. O. That is the situation we have in that city.

I know that every union that has been fighting has had similar massacres occur, but this has been condoned — this South Chicago massacre has been condoned and those who perpetrated it have been held up as great Americans by every newspaper in the city of Chicago. . . .

This is a situation that exists nowhere else except in Chicago, and the reason I say that is because I have been in many strike fields from Alabama in the south, to the north, west, and the east, and we have had men shot down in all of these fields, but never before were we up against the same dastardly underworld political control of a city as we have in Chicago.

The only way out of this situation which Mr. Bittner says "will make the men convicted in the Seabury investigation in New York City have a special heaven set aside for them as clean politicians," is through complete organization of the steel workers, the packing house industry, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the I. L. G. W. U., the Typographical Unions. Then their vote must be combined with other progressive forces.

Outstanding among the achievements of Labor's Non-Partisan League has been the development of a formal working alliance with the most progressive group of organized farmers, the Farmers Union. Besides providing for mutual legislative support, each



group undertakes to promote a better understanding of the other's problems among its own members.

Many lessons for Labor can be drawn from the 1937 elections. In New York City, where Mayor La Guardia was returned with an overwhelming majority and the forces of Tammany suffered an almost complete defeat, the American Labor Party wisely made allies of other progressive anti-Tammany elements. In Detroit, Labor was beaten after a good showing in the primaries. Here Labor had no allies. Nor was it the desertion of the A. F. of L. alone which caused its defeat. A too narrow concentration on the union labor aspect of the election alienated middle-class elements that were progressively inclined.

Labor made a remarkable showing in Pennsylvania, electing candidates in many steel towns where formerly voting as the mills decreed had been part of the process of getting or holding a job.

On November 2, union men or sympathizers were elected up and down what had been called the dark valleys. In the towns around Pittsburgh, thirteen burgesses and mayors were elected, and forty-two other officials, including school board directors, justices of the peace, tax collectors, etc. For the first time since the historic battle of 1892, the Republican regime was routed in Homestead. Johnny Mullen, S. W. O. C. organizer, was elected Mayor of Duquesne, defeating Jim Crawford, who had stated that "even Jesus Christ" couldn't hold a meeting in his city.

Throughout the state of Pennsylvania, labor actively showed how moved the workers had been by the lessons of the steel strike and how determined they were to elect their own candidates.

Two Congressional successes, that of Lyden B. Johnson, whose district includes Austin, Texas, and the sweeping victory of Congressman Lister Hill, candidate for United States Senator in a special Alabama election held in January, 1938, further emphasize labor's new political power.

These campaigns were aided by the fact that throughout the C. I. O. unions a new and vital press has sprung up. There are

over two hundred papers in the C. I. O., many of them ably edited and written in good working class English.

Labor will need these new weapons to combat the pressure of groups demanding a program of hostile labor legislation — amendment of the Wagner Act and the incorporation of unions.

Labor's viewpoint on incorporation was well summarized in *Advance*, published by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers:

Incorporation would give the courts, corporation-minded as they are in most cases, a free entry for meddling in all and every legitimate union activity each time unions contemplate strike action or anything else that may not suit a powerful and juridically well-connected labor employer. Labor has had ample experience with injunction judges to justify lack of confidence in the impartiality of the dispensers of justice in the thousand and one jurisdictions of the courts.

Furthermore, incorporation of unions would make it particularly easy for anti-union employers to have union funds tied up interminably and thus to cripple union activity. This they would do through lawsuits for damages caused by strikes or less conspicuous breaches of contracts initiated by their undercover agents, disguised as union members and acting contrary to union advice and interest. The extent to which anti-union employers will go in such practices has been brought to light by recent senatorial investigations. Such double-crossing, provocative, and deliberate labor union-wrecking activities of employers are not quite so easy to achieve under the present manner in which unions function.

In other words, the incorporation of unions which has been so much talked about is merely another strikebreaking device of the employers, because it would permit the state, still largely in the hands of big business, to revoke charters on any and all pretexts.

Labor foresees that there will be a drive for such legislation throughout the country. Accordingly, at the October, 1937, con-

vention of the C. I. O. in Atlantic City, a legislative program was presented which proposed the following:

(1) A bill establishing a State Labor Relations Board to prevent unfair labor practices.

(2) A bill limiting authority of the courts to issue injunctions in labor disputes.

(3) A bill prohibiting evictions of persons who are unemployed and involved in labor disputes.

(4) A bill protecting civil liberties and prohibiting any local laws which may interfere with the free exercise of such civil liberties.

(5) A bill limiting and regulating appointments of deputy sheriffs and prohibiting payment by private corporations for deputy sheriffs.

(6) A bill limiting and regulating activities of private detectives, private police and private guards.

(7) A bill incorporating collective bargaining provisions in contracts between the State and private individuals.

(8) A bill protecting the payment of wages by employers to employees.

Foreseeing increased unemployment in the major industries, with layoffs already placing the burden of a recession squarely upon labor, the C. I. O. proposed a four-point legislative program to further union organization and to insure each worker his right to a job:

1. That all business engaged in interstate commerce be obliged to comply with a code protecting the rights of labor guaranteed under the laws of the United States.

2. That federal wage and hour legislation be enacted, which would include a basic minimum wage and a maximum hours clause, designed to guarantee a decent standard of living.

3. That the federal government recognize the right of every worker to have a job and enlarge the W. P. A. and P. W. A. to provide for those workers now being deprived of their jobs in industry. That special legislation be enacted to promote education for the youth of this country.

4. That the federal social security laws be amended and enlarged.

The past year has seen sharp cleavages in the old political parties — splits which foreshadow new political alliances. Another year may well see repeated throughout the country the situation which has developed in New York City. There, labor and its allies became organized as an independent force supporting the Mayor, while those opposed to the administration in both the Republican and the Democratic parties united to oppose Fiorello H. La Guardia. Undoubtedly this division of forces will be repeated in the state election of 1938 and the presidential election of 1940.

As has been pointed out these millions of new union members are bound together in support of the New Deal as against the profit-makers. The conflict which they are engaged in is not merely a fight between John L. Lewis and Tom Girdler, or between Little Steel and the S. W. O. C. What has emerged is a battle on a nationwide front with Reaction ranged against Democracy. The same elements which make violent attacks on labor will be found opposing all constructive government aid to the farmer and tenant farmer, and all help to the unemployed and the aged. In other words, they are the enemies of all that progressive legislation for which the overwhelming majority of the people of this country voted.

For the first time in its history labor is determined to safeguard its economic progress through political action. Now that labor has recognized its political power it can look forward with confidence to seeing all those factors which are hostile to it — big business and reactionary groups — unite.

In becoming conscious of itself, labor has realized that with its prosperity goes the prosperity of the country; that its bettered economic situation, especially the billion dollars added to the wage workers' payroll, is a bulwark against depression. It has realized, too, that its political power is also a bulwark against those fascist forces in this country which menace the fundamental principles of democracy.

"The United States," said John L. Lewis, "is the greatest example of a democratic state remaining within the fabric of our imperilled civilization. It is our responsibility, as its citizens, to preserve democracy within its borders. No one can tell what events the next few years may bring forth. Europe is on the brink of disaster and it must be our care that she does not drag us into the abyss after her. . . . What has happened in Germany must not happen here. The establishment of a Fascist dictatorship in the United States would undoubtedly assure a retrogression from which civilization might not recover for ages and from which it would certainly not recover for many years. I know of only one means of insuring our safety — the workers of America must find self-expression in economic, in social, and in political matters. . . .

"I know of but one method to insure safety for the future — labor must become articulate. The millions of workers must express themselves through the medium of organization of their industries or callings. The workers must be made economically free, in order to assure them the maximum of opportunity to champion and defend the elemental principles of human liberty. It was for this purpose that the Committee for Industrial Organization was formed and it is toward this end that we are struggling."

## XXVII. What Labor Wants

*Let him who will, be he economic tyrant or sordid mercenary, pit his strength against this mighty upsurge of human sentiment now being crystallized in the hearts of thirty millions of workers who clamor for the establishment of industrial democracy and for participation in its tangible fruits. He is a madman or a fool who believes that this river of human sentiment, flowing as it does from the hearts of these thirty millions, who with their dependents constitute two-thirds of the population of the United States of America, can be dammed or impounded by the erection of arbitrary barriers of restraint.*

John L. Lewis' radio speech, July 6, 1936

THE FIRST EPIC phase of the C. I. O. is over. With the recession a new challenge has come to a reborn labor movement — to make the cause of the unemployed its own. It is meeting the challenge. The C. I. O., with its form of industrial unionism, its dynamic leadership, was an answer to the unspoken wish which had existed in the hearts of literally millions of workers.

Labor has shown in its struggles an inventiveness, intelligence, and power greater than anything before in its long history. Whole communities of workers have been transformed. The workers have felt their political power, and for the first time they appear in the political arena, saying clearly they will elect their own state, county, and federal representatives. They are asserting that they must have adequate legislation to protect labor in its relations with business.

These questions have arisen on all hands: "What do they want, these millions of newly organized workers? Where are they going?"

Security first of all. They want the right to work. All men have



always wanted that. And this security, this right to work, they have seen taken from them year by year. Opportunity has shrunk with the frontier. We see hundreds of thousands of men displaced each year by new inventions. The strip mills soon to be put in operation by Carnegie Steel, where the ratio of employment will be cut nine for one, is only one small example.

Up to now, workers could make only an individual feeble protest when their means of livelihood was taken from them, whether by "business cycles" or the changing tide of events.

With the advent of the C. I. O. the worker can make an effort toward his own collective security. The short time that has elapsed since the so-called recession has shown what the C. I. O. intends to do. At the Atlantic City convention of October 11, 1937, a business recession with an ever-increasing tide of unemployment was faced, and the four-point legislative program, already referred to, was outlined to safeguard the workers.

Since then John L. Lewis has called on Congress for a great housing program as an immediate means of putting people to work, while individual unions, notably the S. W. O. C., have devised relief programs for their members as well as outlining a great housing program.

For the first time a politically powerful group of workers emerges with a constructive program at a time of national crisis. It is as yet only a tendency. It exists only as a program, but it is the first time in the history of this country that the millions of organized labor have attempted to grapple with a national crisis and to propose constructive measures to keep the workers employed.

Indeed, a little analysis will show that labor's new millions are asking only what those millions asked who endorsed the President in the last election. When the voters of the country rose to endorse the principles of the New Deal, they asked first of all security in their jobs and an American standard of living. And if you analyze why the people of this country so vehemently endorsed the New Deal, it is: (1) to make the national income greater; (2) to see that

it is distributed more equitably among the people. Labor's new millions are helping the processes of democracy, which will hasten the accomplishments of such aims. They are restating in union meetings, in large halls, that they believe that it is the function of good government to promote the welfare of people, rather than that of the small class whose one aim is profits. There has been this conflict between people and profits since the day of our founding fathers. Jefferson said we could have a democracy, or we could have a number of great, autocratic fortunes, but we could not have both.

They are reaffirming what all our greatest statesmen have said — that a political democracy cannot coexist with an industrial despotism.

Senator Robert M. La Follette stated: "While the American people have always been vigilant against governmental tyranny, they have been slow to observe a greater tyranny in the growth of unrestrained private economic power over the life, property, and liberty of a once free people." This industrial tyranny is becoming apparent to all.

Marching with the workers are all those forces which wish to abolish the rural and city slums in which one-third of our people live. For we have learned during the New Deal that one-third of our people are ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed. We know that the great majority of our industrial workers still do not make what is considered a decent standard of living.

We have learned that death and low wages walk hand in hand. Death comes twice as often among the submerged two-thirds of the population as it does among the upper one-third. The death rate of tuberculosis is seven times greater among unskilled workers than among professional people. In the richest nation on the earth, poverty is the greatest cause of death.

We have seen the inroads made on our national wealth by greed. We know that our forests have been plundered, that the very soil itself has been destroyed, and that for every ruined acre of land,

there is also a ruined man. The wastefully slashed timber meant slashed human lives as well, and the livelihoods of people have flowed down to the ocean on the crest of unnecessary floods.

We have learned that we are rapidly becoming a dispossessed people. A vast expropriation of business and land has been going on. Chain stores and great enterprises progressively swallowed the small merchant and individual manufacturer.

An unmortgaged farm today is a rarity. A depression or a drought will send hundreds of thousands of these mortgages into the hands of insurance companies. Nor is this all. Instead of farms, vast food sweatshops have arisen throughout the nation. Again our thinking has lagged behind the actuality. The average person thinks of the farmer as a man who through hard work on his own farm makes his livelihood. Increasingly the farmer is becoming a sweated employee. Fifty years ago more than half the workers were on the farms, where now there are less than a third.

The world has changed. Its industrial organization, its work pattern and scheme of ownership have altered profoundly. A hundred years ago, 80 per cent of the people owned their own farms or businesses. Now, only 10 per cent own them. Small ownership is dying. And this radical change has swept away the old firm moorings of middle-class life. A mounting sense of insecurity has invaded millions of once independent and self-reliant lives. Formerly rooted in the property-owning middle class, they discover that their new status is indistinguishable from that of labor today. Indeed, it is they who help swell the ranks of those thirty millions for whom John L. Lewis speaks.

It has been said repeatedly that no labor movement could be broad enough to take in such different people as West Coast fishermen, New Jersey school teachers, Duluth bank clerks, and Georgia tenant farmers, not to mention the sweeping range of technical professions. There is no common denominator that could serve to unite such disparate elements say many. Yet the C. I. O. is already proving that its aims and program offer the middle class

a means to the very end these people sought when they supported the New Deal. The C. I. O., opposing the unfair, ruthless methods of business, large and small, is fighting for security, for better homes, and a higher standard of living everywhere. These are the aims of the New Deal which millions voted for.

Labor has looked at industry and said, "You produce profits and you acknowledge your responsibility to your investor. Now we are going to demand that you also acknowledge your responsibility toward your workers. For you not only produce profits, but also business cycles which doom everyone to insecurity. You make profits but your by-products are infant mortality, insecure youth, indigent old age, and industrial disease, while you wage a warfare against us when we try to exercise our constitutional rights of organizing."

Labor has realized that to attain security, to banish the three fears which forever have shadowed the lives of all workers — the fear of unemployment, the fear of illness, the fear of old age — it must enlarge its economic power and fortify this power with political action. And this means the transference of power back from a small group of employers to the majority of people, in whose hands, under a democratic society, it was intended to be.

This transfer of power in part from one group to another does not imply that labor's aim is the taking over of business, but the necessary regulation of business.

And so we come at last to what all the disturbance has been about: the inner meaning of the yellow dog contracts, black lists, spies, strikebreakers, and industries transformed into fortresses with arsenals of munitions and tear gas. All this is not to prevent wages rising (how many times has a sop of higher wages been thrown to the workers for the very purpose of keeping them from organizing?), all this has been to keep power in the hands of employers.

The fear of the bankers and industrialists of losing a modicum of their power; the czars' unwillingness to transfer a little power to

the Duma; the opposition of the open shoppers to labor unions and of the A. F. of L. to the C. I. O. — all have their roots in the same swamp.

This explains why in the steel communities the employers will list you five events which made the outlook brighter for them. In the order of their importance, they are: The Chicago Massacre, Tom Girdler, the Little Steel defeat, Monroe, and Governor Davey. In other words, they list as happy circumstances: massacre, vigilantes, the use of troops, the betrayal of labor by public officials and the defiance of federal laws by high business executives. But these are all measures of war. These are not good arguments for the perpetuation of the old oppressive regime. These massacres and killings, these spies, this use of munitions and tear gas against unarmed workers have nothing to do with the business of society.

The business of society is to get food out of the ground and make and distribute goods and services — along with the happiness which should attend such activities — in such a fashion that man can turn his mind from his bodily needs alone to those things which through the ages have distinguished him from animals — his preoccupation with science, art, and religion.

At present the division of food, goods, and services is so uneven as to be fantastic. For society to function at all a better distribution must be attained, and labor must attain it.

Before labor can get the security it wishes, before goods and services can be distributed so society will not be menaced by one depression after another, many tasks, many battles lie ahead.

We have been considering how much has been accomplished. In reality we should think how little. Only a beginning has been made. From any point of view, that legislation which people need to safeguard them from greed is only in its infancy. The security which should be extended to youth and to age has been only inadequately formulated by law. The organizational campaign, the political campaign of the workers have only begun. The royalists still are entrenched and still can buy legislatures and mercenaries.

The tasks before labor are the consolidating of its gains within



its ranks, the formulation of its new techniques, and their application in a less desultory fashion. Labor must educate its membership and cement the bonds between industrial and white collar workers and the farmers. The white collar unions have a double duty to perform: they must help the middle class recognize its place in society and make plain the danger of fascist adventures. These tasks are only the foundation stones on which labor's future power will rest.

Its immediate tasks are the solidification and extension of the organizational and political gains and the battle in both fields against unemployment.

A great piece of human engineering must be accomplished if labor and the rest of the country are to achieve security, and labor is to realize its claim of its right to work. Every step along the way it will meet its hereditary enemy, the great intrenched interests, which to their disadvantage will attempt to frustrate these demands for security, since security is unattainable without a shift in power toward the workers.

In all the noise of industrial warfare, people lose sight of what a labor movement is. It has, first of all, to do with the enhancement of human dignity, since a worker enrolled in a labor union has something to say about the conditions under which he will work. His status toward his employer and his fellow workmen and the people in the town in which he lives is changed. It is this change from a semi-slave status to that of a man full of self-respect which is one of the most important aspects of a labor movement. A labor movement means a man's solidarity with his fellow worker. He ceases being an isolated, powerless individual. He joins the other millions of marching men and partakes of their strength. He exchanges isolation for solidarity and impotence for power. He has the dignity which men throughout the ages have had when they have been banded together for a high purpose — a dignity which is the antithesis of mob spirit.

The labor movement has to do with homes, with what chance children are to have in the world, and whether children are to live in



slums or decent places, and even whether they are to have enough to eat. That is why men go out on strike and why their women uphold them. In the dramatic incidents of a strike, people are apt to lose sight of the fact that the workers are striking for women and children at home — for human dignity and for democracy.

Taken by and large, workers have got nothing except what they have got for themselves. Through years of struggle they have achieved the right to strike, the right to organize. Frightful disasters involving horrible loss of life have called the attention of an indifferent public to the justice of the wage earners' demand for a union. More and more workers realize that only through a union is there any security for their jobs and, therefore, for their homes and the children in those homes. That is why over 50 per cent of the strikes of 1937 were for union recognition.

That is why the workers of Little Steel went out to fight. Only through constant agitation have the workers raised their wages and decreased their hours. Thus only has progress been made in contesting industrial diseases and hazards.

In this country there has been a sudden, joyful recognition by the workers of their power. It was not only a figure of speech that John L. Lewis used when he spoke of "the aspirations in the hearts of thirty millions of workers."

A new unionism is arising from this. This new unionism does not stop at the formal lodge meeting. It sees the union as a way of life which involves the whole community.

One of the most important things that has happened in this vast movement has been the revision of labor's conception of itself. It is not thinking in the terms of industrial labor any more. It has seen that industrial labor, white collar, and professional workers, agricultural workers, and the small farmer are all one. The service trades and the manufacturing trades must walk hand in hand. It has seen that so long as there is a pool of cheap labor in the disinherited tenant farmers and sharecroppers, industrial labor is not safe.

One of the basic ideas which drove John L. Lewis to the C. I. O.

was that all labor is interdependent. This has always been a theory, but now people feel it and live it.

"By the workers of America," Lewis says, "I do not mean only unskilled laborers and skilled artisans. Labor no longer signifies 'the man with the hoe.' It is the voice of the people of the world, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Labor, to us, extends from the unskilled industrial and agricultural workers throughout the so-called white collar groups, including technicians, teachers, professional groups, newspaper employees, and others. I believe also that the fundamental interests of labor and farmers are interdependent and that they should work together for the same democratic and economic objectives."

Who is labor? All of us. All the people who make things, sell things, who farm, teach, write, make scientific discoveries. All of us are labor. On the other side is the profiteer and the racketeer, the industrial royalist and the people that they can buy or fool. This is the current of thought which is swinging through the country.

This new labor movement had a spokesman long ago. His name was Abraham Lincoln. Thousands of workers are entering politics and reaffirming that we have a government, or should have, "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Lincoln and labor had an idea this country really belongs to the people and not to the Henry Fords, the Mellons, and the Tom Girdlers. He said once that, as all things come from labor, it should be the object of all good government to return to the worker as much of the profit of his toil as was possible.

He also said, in his message to Congress, December 3, 1861:

There is one point . . . to which I ask a brief attention. It is the effort to place capital on an equal footing with, if not above, labor in the structure of government. It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital; that nobody labors unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow, by the use of it, induces him to labor. . . . Now, there is no such

relation between capital and labor as assumed. . . . Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.

On Labor Day, 1937, John L. Lewis said:

Not for the selfish interest of labor as a group, but for the welfare of the country as a whole, labor must become strong enough to hold its proper place at the council tables of industry and of the nation.

The great so-called middle class of the American people — farmers, merchants, small business men, and bankers, lawyers, physicians, clergy, economists, writers, engineers, teachers in the public schools, colleges and universities, public officials, members of legislative, administrative, and judicial agencies, and many other groups detached from or not directly involved in the labor movement — must assist in the great task of democratizing our modern machines and technological improvements which our inventors and industrial engineers have conceived and put into practical operation.

In non-technical language this means that the machine must be so managed as to extend, and not to reduce, the field of employment and their greater productivity must be accompanied by shorter hours of work, lower prices of output, and a general advance in mass-purchasing power, of economic well-being, through all groups of the American people.

Without the support of labor — which constitutes two-thirds of our population — this great constructive problem of American democracy cannot be properly solved.

This movement of labor will go on until the purchasing power of the American people is restored; until we have the means to buy and consume the products of American industry.

This movement of labor will go on until there is a more equitable and just distribution of our national wealth.

This movement will go on until the social order is reconstructed on a basis that will be fair, decent, and honest.

This movement will go on until the guarantees of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution are enjoyed by all the people, and not by a privileged few.

Let us hail then, the coming of this new day in the life of labor. Let us resolve in the spirit of our forefathers to do our part in building the foundation upon which we can erect a real superstructure of industrial democracy and social security.

To this end we can all dedicate ourselves to unselfish service in the cause of progress and humanity.



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